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Mrs Teresa Bosley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bosley

Short inspection of Marston Montgomery Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in March 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the last inspection, Marston Montgomery Primary School has amalgamated with another local school, Long Lane Church of England Primary school, to form a federation. You serve as headteacher in both schools. This arrangement came into effect in September 2018, following a thorough process of consultation with parents, carers, staff and pupils. A new governing body has been formed, which presides over both schools. Governors have elected their officers and allocated roles and responsibilities but it is too soon to evaluate the impact of their work on school improvement. Governors are in the early stages of developing systems to ensure that they fulfil their statutory responsibilities and effectively hold leaders to account for the school's performance.

Since the two schools began to work together informally in January 2018, there are early signs of the benefits that the federation will bring. There are already increased opportunities for joint staff planning and training and for pupils to come together for activities at one of the schools on a regular basis. Pupils and parents appreciate the increased potential for joint sporting activities which have been possible since the two small schools joined forces.

Parents who spoke with me praised the way in which the school prepares the older

pupils for their transition to secondary school. Given the size of the school, it is especially important to ensure that the process is managed smoothly and sensitively for pupils. Parents confirm that the school achieves this very well.

Leaders and governors have successfully addressed some of the areas for improvement from the last inspection. However, there is still more work to be done in other areas to make sure that the school remains securely good.

Your work to improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning has been effective. Pupils in both classes work with enthusiasm and persistence. They respond well to routines and instructions. During my discussion with pupils in the key stage 2 class, they were keen to tell me that behaviour in school is 'much better' and that their lessons are rarely disturbed by the behaviour of others. Pupils are proud of their role in bringing this about through the school council.

The teaching of mathematics remains an area of focus and is rightly included in your latest plans for school improvement. In particular, there is a need to ensure a greater degree of challenge in the work set so that pupils can deepen their mathematical knowledge and understanding. This was evident from looking at pupils' workbooks and observing their learning in lessons.

Your priorities for school improvement are appropriate and your plans are clear and precise with regular review milestones in place. However, as headteacher, you carry out all the monitoring checks in school. This means that senior and middle leaders do not have a role in checking the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment in their subjects. As a result, the capacity of the wider leadership team to ensure sustained improvement is limited.

You and your staff provide effective support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Your work to support those pupils, and others who are vulnerable or have additional social and emotional needs, is a strength of the school. You work effectively with a range of agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the support they need. Parents who responded to the online survey expressed their appreciation through comments such as, 'the school works well at nurturing and tending to emotional needs' and, 'this school not only does a fantastic job teaching my children, they take time to care greatly for them whilst doing it'.

Leaders and governors have not ensured that all of the required information for parents is available on the school website. This means that current and prospective parents do not have an accurate overview of the work of the school from its website. Governors are now aware that this must be put right as soon as possible and reviewed regularly.

During our joint observations of learning in the early years foundation stage, it was found that the curriculum does not support the children's learning and development consistently well across all areas of learning. For example, resources to promote children's physical development are scarce. The quality of the resources in the outdoor learning area is poor. Much of the equipment is lacklustre and a suitable

range of activities is not provided to stimulate and inspire children's learning as well as it might.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your recruitment checks on staff, volunteers and governors meet statutory requirements. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and carefully documented. Records show that when a welfare concern is raised, prompt actions are taken, including the involvement of other agencies if required.

All of the staff with whom I spoke said that they receive regular safeguarding training. This was confirmed by your thorough training records. Staff know how to report any concerns.

Parents, staff and pupils confirm that the school is safe. During our discussion, pupils in the key stage 2 class told me about this. One said, 'I always feel safe because I have my friends around me.' Others described their instinctive feeling of safety and security: 'I don't even have to think about it – I know I'm safe here.' Pupils stressed how highly they value the strong feelings of friendliness, care and 'community' that being in a small school provides. Pupils were able to describe with confidence the teaching they had received about the various types of bullying. They said, emphatically, that there is never any bullying at the school.

Inspection findings

- In view of the very small numbers in most year groups, it is not possible to draw meaningful conclusions about pupils' attainment and progress through assessment results alone. End of key stage outcomes can vary widely from year to year. Therefore, we agreed to focus on considering how effectively the curriculum is designed and taught and its impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- Through our discussions, you explained how you ensure that pupils in all year groups receive a broad and balanced curriculum. You make sure that the full curriculum content is covered by means of a four-year cycle in the key stage 2 class and a three-year cycle in the key stage 1 class. Pupils could recall some memorable learning and describe the knowledge that had 'stuck' in their memory. For example, they recalled learning about bees during an exciting project to mount a display of work at the RHS Chatsworth Flower Show.
- In order to ensure that they receive their entitlement to the early years curriculum, children in the Reception Year access a separate classroom and outdoor area for part of the day. However, it was observed that the curriculum in the early years does not promote children's development consistently well across all areas of learning. This was especially noted in the outdoor learning area, which is poorly resourced. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of the early years foundation stage has been consistently below that which is typical for their age.

- During the inspection, we visited all classes together and looked at samples of pupils' current and previous work. This confirmed that the teaching of reading and writing is stronger than mathematics as a result of your focus on writing over recent years.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across the school. Teachers do not have consistently high expectations for the presentation of pupils' work in their books. They also do not provide enough challenge to deepen pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding. You told me that you are currently reviewing your system of marking and the ways in which you provide feedback for pupils. Pupils do not currently receive clear enough guidance on how to improve their work. This also applies to disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils told me that they did not have an awareness of the meaning of the fundamental British values. They experience democracy in action through their school council; however, they did not understand the link between that and British values.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Senior and middle leadership is strengthened by providing opportunities for subject leaders to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The new governing body quickly develops systems to fulfil its statutory duties and hold leaders effectively to account.
- The school website contains all the required information for parents and carers.
- Pupils receive clear teaching about the fundamental British values, so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Teachers' expectations for the presentation of work and the quality of feedback they provide for pupils are consistently good.
- Teachers increase the degree of challenge in mathematics so that pupils make the best possible progress.
- They improve provision and resources in the early years foundation stage, especially in the outdoor learning area, so that a greater proportion of children achieve a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christine Watkins
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held a series of meetings with you. I met with the chair of the governing body and a small group of governors. I met with a representative from the local authority. I conducted a tour of the school with you to look at pupils' learning in all classes and I spoke with a range of teaching and support staff. I spoke with pupils during a group discussion and informally during lessons. I examined pupils' work in their books. I considered the 17 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the responses to the staff and pupil surveys. I examined a wide range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, the school's analysis of pupils' current and past achievement, leaders' monitoring records, external reports about the school, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's self-evaluation summary and its plans for improvement.