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Mr Richard Stead
Headteacher
Milverton Community Primary School
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Dear Mr Stead

Short inspection of Milverton Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 May 2017, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You are passionate about your pupils and know them extremely well. Since the previous inspection, you have established a strong leadership team with the skills and knowledge to complement one another. This team provides a balanced and considered approach to the management and strategic direction of the school. Numbers of pupils are increasing. You are in negotiations about incorporating the Nursery provision, which is based on the school's site but is independently managed. This will ease the transition for pre-school children and continue the good level of transition that exists between other key stages.

Governors are clear about the strategic direction of the school. They are knowledgeable about the school's successes and its areas for development, and are rightly proud of the school. They offer appropriate and purposeful challenge to leaders. Governors are also keen to maintain the strong partnership with schools in the Tone Valley Partnership (TVP) to ensure a much closer working relationship that benefits pupils, and provides professional support for staff and wider cooperation between leaders.

Pupils enjoy being at school and demonstrate exemplary behaviour. They say that they feel very safe and have excellent relationships with staff and one another. Pupils were eager to share their enthusiasm of the school and stated, 'It is a fantastic school where we learn new things every day.' Pupils talked with keenness

about their learning and demonstrated resilience in their schoolwork when they showed me work of which they were proud and told me why.

Parents hold the school in high regard and are united in their passion and appreciation. One parent stated, 'Milverton is brilliant and staff are very professional and personable. They make children feel unique and special.' Parents appreciate the before- and after-school clubs. They recognise the high levels of commitment from staff in all aspects of school life.

You have addressed the areas for development identified at your school's previous inspection. You have established a way of sharing good practice to set work that builds on pupils' prior attainment. The improvement and changes in the curriculum have helped to develop pupils' independence in their learning. This is evident in the development and improvement of provision for boys in the Year 6 class. You have also improved provision and outcomes in the early years. This is evident in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development in the past three years.

Your self-evaluation summary is concise and gives an accurate picture of the school. You have clearly identified the key strengths of the school and you correctly judge the provision in the early years to be a strength. Equally, you have identified areas which are still in need of improvement. You know that the most able pupils will only make rapid progress in lessons where they are stretched and appropriately challenged. Middle leaders and teachers are much more confident this year in setting suitably challenging targets for pupils to enable them to work at greater depth. However, you recognise that the consistency of this approach needs strengthening throughout the school.

Staff appreciate and value your leadership and were keen to share their tremendous commitment and strong team spirit. They stated, 'We are on a journey, striving to improve and excel.' Staff are ambitious in their desire for children to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and governors share a clear commitment to keeping pupils safe. Your policies, procedures and arrangements for safeguarding are meticulous and highly effective. Staff new to the school appreciate the thorough induction and safeguarding training. You work successfully with other agencies, where necessary, to minimise the possibility of harm to any pupil. Staff told me that they receive regular and high-quality safeguarding training to keep them well informed. They know how to act in a range of different circumstances. You carefully evaluate the risks involved when pupils take part in different activities. You are diligent in ensuring that staff recruitment is conducted safely.

Pupils are very confident that they are well looked after and can share any worries they might have with an adult. They understand and describe in detail the behaviour policy and how it works. They felt it was fair, and one pupil admitted that they had fallen foul of the policy this year. However, they described their school as

a happy and safe place. They were especially appreciative of the buddy system. They said that staff are always available to listen and give good advice. Pupils told me confidently that they understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations. Their awareness of the dangers to avoid when using the internet and social media was particularly strong.

Inspection findings

- The initial line of enquiry focused on mathematics and, in particular, the attainment of girls. Middle-attaining girls do not achieve at the same level as the boys. Comprehensive analysis of the 2016 data identified that the main concern was in pupils' fluency and problem solving in mathematics. Your mathematics leader recognised that the changes in mathematics in the national curriculum also meant a new approach to teaching the subject. The school has trained staff in a mathematics mastery programme, which has addressed these issues. Pupils' books show that their understanding of mathematical concepts is improving, especially the girls, and that the majority of pupils are working at the standards expected of them. Many now work at levels beyond expectations, especially in key stage 2. Current data shows that girls' attainment and attitudes in mathematics are improving. However, there is still some variability across classes in teachers' expectations of the most able pupils. We agreed that the focus on challenge to all pupils to reach greater depth in their learning should be continued across the school, while maintaining close scrutiny of girls' attainment.
- The leadership of mathematics is strong. Teachers and support staff have effective support and training to improve their quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers have good subject knowledge in mathematics. They use assessment information effectively to plan learning which builds on what pupils already know and can do. This ensures that pupils are making good progress from their starting points. During discussions with pupils, two of the girls told me that they enjoy learning mathematics. They showed me work that they were proud of and were able to say why, as they had succeeded in completing work they thought that they could not.
- When I visited lessons with you, I saw a common approach to teaching mathematics throughout the school, with a strong emphasis on rapid calculation, reasoning and solving problems. Teachers and pupils use practical resources and visual prompts well in all year groups to support the development of mathematical concepts. Pupils eagerly tackle word problems, help each other, and challenge themselves and others to do even better.
- My second line of enquiry was to establish how well leaders challenge pupils across key stage 2 to ensure continued progress in writing. Previous school data shows that pupils, especially the middle-attaining boys, did not reach the expected level of attainment, particularly in writing, despite high starting points at the end of the early years. Your analysis of the 2016 results showed that the main weakness was in spelling and grammar.
- You have done a great deal to improve the quality of writing, particularly for boys, and there is clear evidence to indicate that improvements are being made in this area. Provision in the early years is developing boys' enthusiasm for

writing and is having a positive impact on outcomes. A sustained and effective focus has been maintained on improving the quality of pupils' writing throughout the school. Your approach to improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar is rigorous and methodical and this is having a pronounced impact on improving the technical accuracy, fluency and sophistication of pupils' written work.

- The work in pupils' books shows that they have made a great deal of progress since the start of the academic year. This is backed up by the school's data. School leaders anticipate improved outcomes in writing for the coming year for all year groups. Boys' progress is in line with target expectations. In order to continue the improvement, we agreed that the staff would benefit from sharing ideas and expertise that are used in the early years and in Year 6.
- Historically, pupils' rates of attendance have been at or above average. However, in 2016, attendance dipped to below the national average for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school accurately identified the reasons for this and took the right actions. Rates of attendance are now once again close to the national average for primary schools.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the focus on challenging girls in mathematics to work at greater depth is continued while not losing focus on boys' development
- the focus on writing, especially for boys, uses the curriculum expertise found in Year 6 and the early years.

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

Yours sincerely

Terry Mortimer
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, your senior leadership team and other staff members. The inspection also involved a meeting with the chair of governors, and two other governors, as well as speaking with a representative of the local authority. There were 82 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We visited all the classrooms together, to observe pupils' learning and

talk to them about it. Work by pupils with a range of abilities was looked at in mathematics and English and in topics. I listened to a range of pupils reading. A wide range of documentation and information relating to your self-evaluation, school improvement planning, equalities, assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and safeguarding, was also examined.