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Mr William Bentall
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bentall

Short inspection of Moretonhampstead Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your school is a vibrant place of learning. Pupils' current progress is strong and the overall quality of education for those now at the school is good. At the time of your appointment in April 2015, this was not always the case. A period of turbulence in leadership and staffing during that time resulted in a drop in standards and in pupils' progress. Your calm and measured focus on pupils' learning, allied with your steely determination to tackle weak teaching, is one of the key reasons the school remains good. Pupils' progress this year is markedly increased, especially at key stage 2, and most pupils are receiving high-quality experiences at your school.

You have successfully addressed the underachievement evident last year that classified the school as 'coasting' according to the Department for Education. Governors are equally committed to improving the school's performance further. They hold you and other leaders to account rigorously and play a crucial role in monitoring the school's performance. Governors use the support and guidance from trust leaders to check the accuracy of school developments carefully. Trust actions play a critical part in supporting the headteacher through an uncompromising drive to be the finest school possible. Trust leaders have supported the school well to

implement as smoothly as possible the substantial changes required. All involved in the school, at the time of the inspection, display the resolve and purpose to provide the very best for each pupil.

The changes you and trust leaders have made to leadership and teaching have undoubtedly left your school in a much stronger position than in 2015. All those spoken to during the inspection understand that, above all else, you must now maintain the momentum and rigour shown during the last two years. This will ensure that your new raised expectations and ways of working have maximum impact going forward. You are aware that this is particularly the case in the early years and key stage 1, where improvements have been slower to embed than in key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

All involved in the school community are committed to keeping pupils safe. You make sure all necessary checks are made to confirm that those who wish to work with children are suitable. Training for safeguarding and child protection is up to date, regular and welcomed, enabling staff and governors to fully discharge their duties. Pupils and parents are confident that issues are followed up. Pupils are knowledgeable about matters of safety through activities planned in the curriculum. For example, routine activities such as walking to the local swimming pool are used well to reinforce aspects of road safety.

Your strong emphasis on pupils' personal development promotes their positive behaviour, with respect and courtesy as the norm. De-escalation strategies are emphasised through your anti-bullying and behaviour approaches. Should pupils display any inappropriate behaviour, staff have been trained to use the established strategies to deal with any incidents safely. Effective links are evident with outside agencies to cater for vulnerable pupils. Your strong commitment to pupils' safety is demonstrated through your plans to further develop your work on the teaching of online safety for pupils. While it is perfectly adequate, you feel greater involvement from staff, pupils, parents and governors would enhance this area further. Overall, the leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and of a high quality.

Inspection findings

- On this inspection, together we started the day by focusing on how well boys were progressing in their writing. We also explored how well girls were performing in mathematics. We looked at how well the most able pupils are being stretched and challenged. Finally, we investigated whether pupils' attendance was improving quickly enough. During the day it became clear that

aspects of practice were weaker in the early years and key stage 1 so we adjusted our plan and looked more closely at these areas.

- Your adaptations to the curriculum across the school are engaging boys more in their writing and helping them make good progress. Parents recognise these positive changes. Greater choice in what boys write about, where in the school they write and which writing tool they use, such as laptops, is motivating boys to produce a greater amount of higher-quality work. Older pupils talk knowledgeably about their writing successes and what they still find challenging, such as 'parentheses using modal verbs' or 'active and passive voice'. Some aspects of spelling and weaker handwriting are still holding a number of pupils back from attaining as well as they could.
- The teaching of writing is providing a clear structure for developing pupils' understanding of the purpose, organisation and features of different genres. Pupils use their good knowledge and imagination to create clear writing for a range of purposes, for example when crafting descriptions of monsters for poems in Year 3 and 4. When the purpose and organisation of a text is taught alongside the technical aspects of writing composition, pupils' progress is rapid. During our learning walks it was clear to see that boys were writing well over time, across a wide range of subjects. Occasionally teachers do not focus closely enough on the impact that word, sentence or punctuation choices have on the reader. In these instances, basic literacy skills for middle- and lower-ability pupils are not developed as well.
- Following the mathematics outcomes in 2016, your thorough analysis has resulted in a different approach at the school. Training and new methods of developing pupils' mathematics skills are bearing fruit, particularly at key stage 2. On our learning walk, we particularly noted pupils' readiness to think more deeply and explain their reasoning. For example, Year 6 girls were keen to explain their understanding of the relationship between fractions and decimals and the link to percentages. Girls confidently tackled conundrums that challenge assumptions such as '6 divided by $\frac{1}{2} = 3$ ' and provided a deeper explanation of why mistakes are often made when dividing fractions. From looking at work in older pupils' books it is apparent that this type of questioning is a more consistent feature of everyday mathematics work.
- Your analysis of girls' performance also revealed that girls' attainment was below average because they were reluctant to risk errors in mathematics. This hindered them from learning from mistakes and bettering their performance. Your emphasis on developing pupils' mathematical language and reasoning is ensuring that more girls are on track to go on from their starting points and reach the standards expected for their age, as well as the higher standards or 'greater depth', than in 2016.
- The curriculum in mathematics is not, however, enabling more pupils in key stage 1 and children in the early years to make good enough progress. Across these age ranges, concepts are not developed sufficiently well for these pupils. Solving mathematical problems, a requirement of the early years mathematical curriculum, is not yet an embedded part of activities planned. Topics jump from one area of mathematics to another and present as a 'piecemeal' approach. As a

result, not enough of these pupils are progressing as well as their older peers. You have clear plans in place to address this issue.

- Your monitoring of the quality of education in the early years points to some inconsistent practice. Inspection findings support this view. Historically, children's assessments were too generic and not used to inform the precise next steps in learning required. Activities planned, both inside and outside, did not match children's learning needs well enough. Consequently, children were not making the progress expected of them. Robust intervention to tackle these and other performance issues, alongside support from an external consultant, is ensuring that recent provision has improved markedly. Work in children's learning journeys and literacy books illustrates that children are rapidly catching up on any lost ground.
- The most able pupils are being stretched well in their learning. Pupils spoken to about their work showed a good understanding of a range of complex issues. They have, through historical enquiry, acquired a good knowledge of how Britain shaped the world. Pupils are familiar with key people in British history, such as Nelson, Churchill, Wellington and Shakespeare, along with their impact on the world. Pupils are familiar with major events, such as the break with Rome during Tudor times. Pupils enjoy the new approach adopted to challenging their learning in daily lessons. Pupils' progress is improving because they are guided well by teachers to start their activities from what they know, understand and can do. Challenges move pupils' learning on quickly, and at increasing levels of difficulty, because no time is lost covering work or concepts they already understand.
- Your whole-school approaches to improving pupils' overall attendance and reducing persistent absence are proving successful. Historically, pupils supported through the pupil premium and some girls were absent too often. This term, such absence has largely been eradicated. You are also working with families to encourage pupils to attend the breakfast club. Consequently, pupils are much better prepared and ready for learning. Weekly attendance awards, newsletter reminders and much greater rigour in monitoring and following up pupil absence are evident. Such actions, combined with new arrangements for the start of the school day, are all contributing positively to this area of your work. Pupils' attendance is now at least in line with the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' handwriting, presentation and spelling improve further
- pupils fully understand what impact their word, sentence and punctuation choices when writing have on the reader
- the curriculum in mathematics is developed in key stage 1 and the early years so that understanding of concepts is fully developed and all pupils are supported to reach even higher standards

- activities planned are better matched to children's learning needs in the early years foundation stage.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Light

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I held meetings with you and with the leaders for English and mathematics and special educational needs. I met with the co-chairs of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with the executive headteacher of South Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust. The views of a number of parents were gathered through their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also met with several parents while dropping their children to school. Visits to all classrooms were conducted jointly with you or your leader for mathematics to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, to review the quality of pupils' work over time, and to listen to pupils read and talk informally with them about their experiences of school. A range of documentary evidence was evaluated, including documents relating to safeguarding and governance. I met with a group of the most able pupils from Years 5 and 6.