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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Michelle Motley
Headteacher
Merryhills Primary School
Bincote Road
Enfield
EN2 7RE

Dear Mrs Motley

Short inspection of Merryhills Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 April 2018 with James Hollinsley, Ofsted Inspector, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You, your leaders and governors are enthusiastic about developing the school and work together well. You reflect accurately on the school's strengths and identify ways of improving it further. You are focused on the right priorities. Timely changes are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. For example, you have changed the way that disadvantaged pupils are being supported so that they receive consistently good teaching.

Previous strengths, such as the careful monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress, continue to be used effectively. Areas identified for improvement at the time of the last inspection have been tackled successfully. For example, free-choice activities in the early years provision are now purposeful, and pupils across the school have a better understanding of what they need to learn next.

Most parents and carers are very happy with your school and appreciate the way their children are being helped according to their specific needs. They typically make positive comments such as 'Someone is always happy to help you', and 'There is something extra for children at all levels.'

Your and your leaders' actions ensure that the school is continuing to improve. Strong support is given to teachers to help them to develop. You have trained your leaders well so that they are effective in supporting members of staff in school and in other schools in the local area.

You and your leaders ensure that there is a calm and orderly atmosphere in school that is conducive to good learning. Pupils are positive about their school and are happy to follow your set of 12 values. They demonstrate these values, such as friendship and self-belief, in their daily lives. Pupils agree that the behaviour policy is fair and followed by all members of staff.

Leaders have strengthened the curriculum so that reading and mathematics are taught as successfully as writing. You are now in the process of improving the science curriculum. Pupils do not consistently demonstrate a greater depth of knowledge and understanding in their written work in science. Across the curriculum, pupils enjoy making their writing interesting, but do not consistently take enough care with the formation of letters and the presentation of their work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Members of staff and other adults who work at your school are checked thoroughly to make sure that they are suitable to work with the pupils. Training is frequent and covers the necessary safeguarding and child protection guidance. Members of staff are clear about what they must do if they have concerns about a pupil.

Pupils feel safe and know that you and your staff will help them when necessary. They make comments such as 'You know that someone is there to help if something happens', and 'We are like a big family.' Pupils are knowledgeable about safety including e-safety and cyber bullying. They behave sensibly indoors and when out at play, minimising the risk of accidents. Parents are positive about the support they receive from you and your staff. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire said that their children feel safe at school.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to look at the progress that disadvantaged pupils are making in reading, mathematics and science. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made less progress than others did by the end of Year 6. You have prioritised work in this area and, as a result, have changed the way you support disadvantaged pupils. Additional teachers are now working in lessons to ensure that these pupils receive appropriate support in their learning. Questioning is focused sharply on the needs of individuals, and work is adjusted as needed. For example, during the inspection, in a literacy lesson in Year 4, pertinent questions were asked so that pupils were all able to construct high-quality sentences about Howard Carter's archaeological excavations. Your assessment information and our observations show that disadvantaged pupils are now making at least as much progress as others across the school.
- However, while all pupils are doing well in reading, writing and mathematics, they do not consistently demonstrate a greater depth of knowledge and understanding in science when writing up their experiments. This is reflected in one of your

whole-school priorities to develop pupils' mastery of subjects across the curriculum.

- Next, we looked at how well pupils are using their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) to support their reading and writing. In 2017, pupils made slower progress in reading than in writing by the end of Year 6. We found that you have changed the way that you teach reading across the school. Pupils use their phonics knowledge well to support their learning, and teachers have strengthened the way that new vocabulary is being taught. For example, in Year 5, pupils used words and phrases such as 'aviation', 'quasar' and 'globular clusters' when discussing a text about air travel and space. Pupils are being asked challenging questions to help them think more deeply about the books they are reading.
- At the time of the last inspection, pupils did not have a clear understanding of how well they were progressing. Pupils are now able to explain what they are learning. They enjoy checking their progress in writing and mathematics, using the 'next step' sheets attached to their workbooks. They use a computerised system for checking their mathematics homework so that they are clearer about how well they are doing.
- Finally, we agreed to look at opportunities for children in the early years provision to make purposeful choices in their learning. This was another area for development at your last inspection. We found that your leaders plan a wide range of exciting activities indoors and outside in the early years. All activities include a clear purpose, and members of staff help children to decide what they would like to learn when working independently. We observed children learning new vocabulary to prepare for a visit from the fire service. They knew that the ladders were 'telescopic' and 'heavy' and were keen to use these new words in their writing and when rescuing people from the model house.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are challenged in their written work in science so that they demonstrate a greater depth of knowledge and understanding when they write up their experiments
- teachers' expectations for the presentation of pupils' work, including letter formation, are raised.

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

Yours sincerely

Alison Cartlidge
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning during several learning walks with members of the senior leadership team.
- Discussions were held with leaders, other members of staff, members of the governing body and an adviser from the local authority.
- Inspectors held informal discussions with several parents and scrutinised 206 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors considered 43 survey responses from members of staff and 38 from pupils.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and scrutinised a range of pupils' work.
- Information supplied by the school was analysed, including the school's own information about how well pupils are doing and checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school. The inspectors also looked at the school development plan and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.