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Miss Amanda Lavelle
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Lavelle

Short inspection of Mereworth Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 the 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. As a new headteacher in September 2015, you took over from two periods of interim headship. Your highly effective leadership is valued by governors, subject leaders and parents. You have a very clear view about what your school does well and where it could do even better. Your plans for improvement are ambitious and focused on improving pupils' outcomes even further.

You have maintained the strengths identified in the last inspection. Pupils' behaviour around the school and in classrooms is exemplary. Mereworth is a tranquil place to learn. Pupils take great pride in their work and their school environment. Break and lunchtimes are calm and purposeful. Pupils know and understand the school's values and do all that they can to act in accordance with them.

You provide pupils with a broad, balanced and rich curriculum. The quality of art work across the school is stunning. Pupils are taught key skills right from the early years and look at the work of established artists to gain inspiration. Subject leaders are clear that they have learned more from your leadership in the last 18 months than they have in the rest of their careers. However, you recognise that you do not have the same quality of assessment information in other subjects as you do in English and mathematics.

Governors are effective. They know the school very well because they take every

opportunity to ask questions about the school's performance information. Governors use their time in school well, to see at first-hand what they are being told. They are absolutely clear that they do not make judgements about teaching and learning but will talk to staff about leaders' work to improve teaching and learning. Governors are not complacent about their work. They use skills audits to recruit the right people and have thought carefully about succession within the leadership of the governing body.

At the last inspection leaders were asked to raise standards in key stage 1 writing. You have done this. In 2014, 2015 and 2016 the proportion of pupils working at the expected and higher standard in writing at the end of Year 2 has been at least in-line with, and sometimes higher than, those found nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records of staff concerns regarding pupils' well-being are detailed and of high quality. Leaders record their actions diligently. Governors review a wide range of processes and practices regarding pupils' safety and well-being. As a result, they challenge leaders to improve effective systems even further. Leaders have created a culture where safeguarding is everyone's priority.

Referrals to other agencies including Early Help are swift and detailed because leaders know pupils and families well, which ensures prompt action should the need arise. Induction processes are clear and staff who join at different points in the year are given clear information about how to keep pupils safe. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. You have provided opportunities for them to learn about issues such as e-safety.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection I looked at: the progress that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make in the early years and key stage 1; the impact that pupil premium funding is having on the attendance levels of disadvantaged pupils, the impact subject leaders are having on teaching and learning; the quality of the early years curriculum and the impact it is having on raising standards.
- Disadvantaged children make good progress in the early years. Adults provide additional support to ensure that children who are not working at the expected standards catch up quickly. Disadvantaged pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in key stage 1. Planned learning takes account of pupils' starting points, including pupils who are working at significantly lower levels than their peers. Additional adults provide sensitive and effective support that ensures that pupils' personal development and welfare needs are met well.
- Additional funding is used effectively. Pupil premium funding is focused on tackling barriers to learning and progress, including low attendance levels. More disadvantaged pupils now attend school regularly. Leaders' support for the most

vulnerable pupils is highly effective. As a result, pupils with very low attendance levels historically are coming to school more often.

- Subject leaders are having a positive impact on teaching and learning. Leaders have good subject knowledge and know what is happening in the school in their subjects. They look closely at planning, talk to pupils about their learning and review work in pupils' books. As a result, leaders are clear about what is working well and what could be even better. Leaders have been quick to identify that in some subjects teachers could be even more precise about the knowledge and skills pupils need to develop next. Leaders have a clear plan to develop assessment systems across all subjects.
- Children in the early years make a great start to their school life at Mereworth. Adults have very clear knowledge about what children know and can do. The curriculum is broad, balanced and rich with opportunities to talk, paint, write, imagine and explore. Adults are very ambitious for children and give them clear and age-appropriate guidance about what success in their learning will look like. As a result, children make good progress, achieve well and are ready to join key stage 1.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- assessment systems across the curriculum enable teachers to plan even more effectively for the progression of pupils' knowledge and skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Cole
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and governors to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I accompanied senior leaders to classes in all three key stages. I met subject leaders and evaluated their work. I spoke to pupils around the school and looked at 166 pupil questionnaires. We evaluated a range of work in pupils' books. I scrutinised 73 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 32 staff survey returns. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment.