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Mrs Sarah Worthington
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Worthington

Short inspection of Malpas Alport Endowed Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 June 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 and the deputy headteacher provide highly effective leadership. You are ably supported by a strong team of staff who share your high expectations. Since the last inspection you and your staff have worked tirelessly to improve the quality of teaching and pupil outcomes. Your self-evaluation of the school is honest and accurately identifies where improvements are needed.

Malpas Alport Endowed Primary School provides a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere for pupils. The school's motto, 'creativity is the heart of learning', shines through everything. Pupils are happy, friendly and polite. They behave extremely well in lessons and around the school at breaktimes. You have placed a strong emphasis on the creative curriculum. Pupils' 'topic' books, such as their work on Romans, show that their creative skills are well developed. Topics are further enriched by an interesting range of trips, for example visits to museums. Pupils take great pride in their work. They enjoy participating in range of clubs such as drama, dance and chess club. Pupils also have many opportunities to learn and play a range of sports, including hockey and football. They value opportunities to take on extra responsibility as buddies to younger pupils or being on the school council.

Due to local demand you have increased provision in the early years and now have three-year-old children in your new pre-school. Additionally, due to increased pupil numbers, the hall is being extended and four additional classrooms are being built in order to accommodate Reception and key stage 1 pupils. You and your governors are managing these changes very well.

Parents are highly supportive of the school. A high percentage of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that their children are well looked after and well taught. Typically parents said, 'My child loves it here and is really well supported.' Another parent said, 'Teachers are fantastic and bring topics like Egyptology to life.'

Middle leaders have gained much from opportunities to develop their leadership. They spoke enthusiastically about the range of activities they carry out as part of their responsibilities. All staff who responded to the online questionnaire feel that the school is well led and managed.

Governors are very committed to the school and are ambitious for its future success. One commented, 'We want children to be confident life-long learners, who feel safe.' Governors know the school well and use their wide range of skills to challenge you and your leaders. They offer you strong strategic and specialist support. For example, governors give effective support for the development of the major building project which is currently under way and for the management of the pre-school for three-year-olds.

Since the last inspection, pupils' outcomes have continued to improve. Children get off to a flying start in the Reception class. In 2017, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year was above the national average. Reading and mathematics are a strength of the school. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the Year 1 phonics screening check was above average. At the end of key stage 2 in 2016, progress in reading and mathematics was significantly above the national average. The unvalidated overall progress scores for reading and mathematics in 2017 at the end of key stage 2 continued to be high.

At the last inspection, you were asked to raise standards in key stage 1. You have responded well to this. Teachers have high expectations and use their subject knowledge to plan interesting lessons which meet pupils' needs. The most able pupils have opportunities to extend their learning through suitably challenging work. All teachers provide pupils with feedback to improve their work. Progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is rigorously tracked and appropriate support is put in place. You and your staff have rightly maintained a strong focus on developing pupils' love of reading. During the inspection, pupils who read to me used their phonics skills well to sound out unfamiliar words. Pupils' fluency with basic mathematical calculations is developing well. Teachers use book-led themes to capture pupils' imagination and provide them with the opportunity to write for a purpose.

Teaching in key stage 1 has improved and pupils are making better progress than in the past. However, you have identified that pupils' writing in key stage 1 is not as good as their reading or mathematics. You also recognise that you could do more to ensure that disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 achieve the highest standards.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe in school. Leaders ensure that training for all staff and governors is up to date. Staff know the correct actions to take if they have a concern about a pupil. Referrals are timely and leaders work with external agencies effectively. Parents and staff are confident that pupils are safe and well cared for. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They say that all adults listen to them and take their concerns seriously. Bullying is rare at the school. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example while on the internet (through safety lessons) and on the road (through Bikeability courses).

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of this inspection, we agreed on several key areas to investigate. The first related to your pre-school for three-year-olds. Teachers are suitably qualified and experienced. Leaders make sure that safeguarding and welfare requirements are met. Adults use assessment effectively to plan activities that children's needs and interests. Learning journeys show that adults use engaging ways to teach early reading, writing and mathematical skills. Children are happy, confident and make good progress from their starting points. They behave well, take turns and share resources. Plans are under way to improve the outdoor provision for the pre-school. Work on the outdoor area is due to be completed this year.
- The second area to investigate was how effectively leaders are promoting good learning and progress in writing. In the past, pupils' achievement in writing at key stage 2 has been strong, but in 2017 there was a dip in the results in writing. In addition, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in writing at the end of key stage 1 was below the national average in 2017. You have put strategies in place that are already having an impact. Teachers are focused on improving pupils' grammar and spelling. Pupils use punctuation and a range of vocabulary well when completing extended writing. The use of themes such as 'Vikings' and 'Anglo-Saxons' engages pupils' interests and provides them with the opportunity to apply skills across the curriculum. Pupils' work and current assessment information show that more pupils now make good progress from their starting points. However, you are aware that there is still more to do to ensure that pupils' writing continues to improve.
- The third area of focus related to attendance. Pupils say that they enjoy school and this is reflected in their above-average attendance. However, the absences of a small number of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have been higher than those of other pupils in the past. You have appointed an attendance officer to make sure that absences are monitored more closely and work closely with families. Rewards such as trophies, prizes and certificates also help to promote good attendance. The impact of these initiatives is that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has increased and is above the national average.
- Another key focus was how effectively leaders are securing strong progress for

disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils nationally in key stage 1. Leaders track the progress of disadvantaged pupils well. Teaching assistants deliver extra support for those pupils who may have fallen behind. Inspection evidence shows that disadvantaged pupils are making better progress. However, you have rightly identified that there is more to do to ensure that the differences in progress diminish more quickly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to develop pupils' grammar and spelling skills so that writing outcomes further improve
- they further accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 from their starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and a group of middle leaders. I met with seven members of the governing body, including the chair. I also held a telephone conversation with your school improvement advisor. I met formally with pupils and also spoke with other pupils during breaktimes. I visited a number of classes, where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I listened to pupils read. I scrutinised pupils' work across the school. Parents talked with me as they dropped their children off at school. In addition, I took account of 36 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 34 free-text responses. I also considered the views of 11 staff and 32 pupils through Ofsted's online questionnaires. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies about keeping children safe, records of training, safeguarding checks, and attendance and behaviour information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.