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Mrs Gemma Topolinski
Head of School
Masefield Primary School
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Dear Mrs Topolinski

Short inspection of Masefield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 2019, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has benefited from the opportunities that have been available by joining the BASE multi-academy trust. You have received support from an effective executive headteacher and knowledgeable trustees. They hold leaders to account for the performance of the school by asking incisive questions at meetings. Together, you have created a vision for school improvement based on a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

The loss of key leaders in the period just after the school's last inspection led to an apathetic atmosphere among staff. Leaders have worked tirelessly to turn this around to create a forward-thinking culture in the school. Staff feel valued and proud to be part of the school because of the collaborative ethos that you have created. The staff with whom I spoke said that leaders across the trust have a positive attitude; they are supportive and approachable. The vast majority of staff responding to the inspection survey were positive about the opportunities that they have had to develop their skills. This development of staff has been a driving force behind the improvements that you have brought to the school, to ensure that the quality of education in the school is good.

Leaders have taken effective action to address the recommendations from the previous inspection, to promote reading, phonics and spelling well. Teaching assistants have been provided with training to support pupils' guided reading, to encourage pupils to read more frequently. This has been accompanied by a large

investment in books and the redevelopment of the school library, so that pupils have quality texts to read. All staff have received training in the teaching of phonics. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully. Leaders identify pupils' needs well. There has been a more focused approach to developing pupils' spelling through dedicated lessons and weekly spelling tasks for pupils to complete at home. As a result, pupils' progress and attainment in writing at the end of key stage 2 have improved over the last three years.

The pupils at the school are a delight. Their behaviour in lessons shows that they know what it means to be a successful learner. The parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, are very positive about the welcoming staff and about the improvements that you have brought about at the school. An outcome of the strong relationships that pupils have with staff is that there is an atmosphere of mutual respect. This reflects the relationships between staff and leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. High-quality records show that there is a clear and systematic approach to the management of safeguarding concerns. In response to identifying a potential risk to pupils, senior leaders have prioritised the teaching and learning of online safety. Pupils have a very strong awareness of how to keep themselves safe when online.

Pupils feel safe at school. They said that this is because of the high level of care provided by staff. Pupils feel that they can approach staff with any concerns that they have. The Year 6 pupils with whom I spoke feel safe from bullying. They were emphatic in their response that any rare instances of bullying are dealt with swiftly and decisively.

Staff are vigilant and have a detailed and thorough awareness of safeguarding. They receive regular training and updates in staff meetings. You have ensured that safeguarding is at the core of everything that staff do.

Inspection findings

- This inspection focused on several key lines of enquiry. The first was to see how effectively leaders were developing children's early language skills. You have ensured that this is your number-one priority for development. No time is wasted in the early years in getting children to learn their letters and sounds. Teachers' enthusiasm for reading and for teaching phonics is infectious. As a result, children enjoy their learning and are keen to join in. Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 use their phonics skills well to read unfamiliar words. For example, Reception children were keen to show me the range of words they had collected and to tell me that the 'igh' sound appears mainly in the middle of words. The pupil premium is used well to provide additional support for disadvantaged pupils. In the early years and key stage 1, the funding is used to

consolidate their phonic knowledge so that they can keep pace with the learning in classes. All staff have received a wealth of high-quality training to support pupils' learning and to ensure that there are high expectations for all pupils. Consequently, pupils' attainment in the Year 1 phonics check in 2018 was in line with the national average.

- You have ensured that the pupil premium funding has been used to support disadvantaged pupils' language development from an early age. There are signs at the end of the Reception Year of improvements in the proportion of children achieving the early learning goals for their communication and language development, and in reading. However, when reading texts, the fluency of the middle- and lower-ability pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 is disrupted by pupils trying to sound out common vocabulary that they would be expected to know on sight. This delay means that they are too focused on individual words to be able to understand the sentences and the texts that they read. The range of vocabulary known by disadvantaged pupils is much more limited. Although key stage 1 pupils make good progress in the development of their composition and use of punctuation, their writing lacks description. This is because of their lack of understanding of key vocabulary. As such, disadvantaged pupils' attainment at the end of Year 1 is below the national average in reading and writing. Teachers have started to work on developing pupils' vocabulary.
- The second key line of enquiry looked at how effectively leaders ensured that pupils make progress in the development of their geography and history skills in upper key stage 2. The leader for these subjects has a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of provision, because of the training that she has received for her role. The work of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils shows that they study a range of interesting and engaging topics in geography and history. However, the subject-specific skills in upper key stage 2 are not as well developed as they could be. In history, pupils learn a range of facts about the topics they have studied. For example, Year 6 pupils gain knowledge of events in history such as understanding the causes of World War II. However, they do not have a good enough understanding of how these events shaped history. In geography, pupils' skills are not built upon well enough to ensure their clear progression in the subject. This is because it is studied too infrequently and pupils' learning lacks depth. Leaders have already identified that the development of pupils' subject-specific skills, particularly in geography, is a priority for development.
- Finally, I looked at how effectively teachers challenge pupils in key stage 2 to achieve the highest standards in mathematics. The mathematics leader has received specialist mathematics training as part of her leadership role. As such, she has a strong awareness of her subject and about pupils' current learning across the school. She has ensured that staff have received a range of support and development. This is in order to challenge pupils to work through increasingly difficult challenges in their mathematics work. In response to the very good rates of progress at the end of key stage 2, the mathematics leader has put in place measures to promote pupils' reasoning in key stage 1. This is a long-term strategy to improve pupils' mathematical understanding even further. Throughout the school, pupils' books show a strong strand of their developing

reasoning skills, especially their verbal reasoning. There are many opportunities for pupils to apply these skills to solving problems. This is threaded through the curriculum. Pupils use an online system that allows teachers to assess pupils' understanding at the point of learning. Staff swiftly intervene with individuals, groups or the whole class to address any misconceptions. This ensures that expectations for pupils' achievement are high. Pupils enjoy the progressively more difficult bronze, silver and gold challenges. These provide different levels of difficulty in order to extend and deepen pupils' learning. As a result of these actions, progress at the end of key stage 2 has been significantly above that seen nationally for the last two years. The work of current pupils shows that this strength in the teaching of mathematics is continuing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils develop their range of vocabulary further in key stage 1, to enable them to read with greater fluency and to improve their descriptive writing skills
- the curriculum focuses on developing pupils' subject-specific skills in geography and history in upper key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with leaders and trustees to discuss aspects of the school's leadership and management and their approach to safeguarding pupils. I reviewed documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.

We visited classes to observe the teaching and learning of phonics in the early years and in Year 1. I visited other lessons in key stage 2 with the deputy headteacher to observe mathematics. I spoke to pupils about their work informally during lessons. I also discussed a range of topics with pupils relating to the school's provision. This was done both formally and informally. I conducted a scrutiny of pupils' writing in key stage 1 and a scrutiny of pupils' mathematics work in key stage 2. I also looked at geography and history work in Year 5 and Year 6. I heard children read individually from Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. I also heard pupils read as part of their work in lessons, including phonics lessons.

I reviewed documentation, which included the monitoring of teaching and learning, minutes of governors' meetings, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, and the school development plan. I took into account 23 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 19 responses to the staff survey and 19 responses to the pupil survey.