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Mr Richard Jenkins  
Headteacher  
The Meads Primary School  
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Dear Mr Jenkins

### **Short inspection of The Meads Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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 September 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You and your leaders' commitment to a 'values-based education' is having a positive impact on the way pupils behave and learn. Modelled well by adults, there is a mutual respect throughout the school.

The values such as determination and patience have helped to develop the way pupils approach work and provide them strategies to support their resilience. Pupils in lessons are engaged and enthusiastic about their learning; they do not give up easily. Those I spoke with demonstrated a love of learning. They were ambitious and shared their future aspirations to be scientists and other credible professions. Year 6 pupils have valued their time at The Meads and told me that they had appreciated the extra after-school support that their teachers had provided to help them to make better progress in their learning.

You have made good progress in resolving the areas for improvement outlined in the previous inspection report. This is notably the case in the deployment of your teaching assistants. You clearly value the support additional adults provide, particularly those who support pupils with significant social and emotional needs. You have invested in their development with high-quality training so that they are more confident at supporting pupils in readiness for their learning. In addition, many have completed courses with the Open University to further develop their understanding of children's learning. You have since evaluated the impact of their work and found that additional adults are making a positive contribution particularly in supporting pupils who sometimes find attending school challenging.

You and your team's good work to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils has continued since the previous inspection. In 2017, pupils at the end of both key stages attained at or above the expected standards. In addition, pupils in Year 6 made progress in line with other pupils nationally in reading and writing and made progress significantly above that of other pupils nationally in mathematics. Your close monitoring and focused small-group support for disadvantaged pupils have led to them making good progress again this year.

Your exciting curriculum develops pupils' learning and deepens their understanding of the world around them, while exemplifying the school's core values. Teachers plan topics that make purposeful links across a range of subjects. Carefully planned lessons extend and develop pupils' thinking. For example, in their study of South America, pupils are asked to consider the lives of South American tribes in the past and then consider how they live in the present day, without technology. After studying the rainforest, they are asked to write a guide on how to survive in such rainforests. In science, while exploring forces and gravity, pupils put together a critical discussion considering and testing the different theories of Galileo and Aristotle. Through their studies, pupils are encouraged to become curious and critical learners.

Over the last year, you have found it a challenge to retain teachers particularly at middle leadership level, and especially those who can support other teachers with their good subject-specific knowledge and expertise. You, as a local leader of education, have begun to effectively distribute subject leadership responsibilities across the school. You and your governors have clear plans in place to tackle recruitment and retention within the school. You recognise that there is more training needed to support your middle leaders in developing in their new subject leader roles.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your governors have established a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Checks on all employees' suitability to work with children are complete. Your procedures for recording pupil concerns ensure that they are followed up in a timely fashion. Systems for recording the checks on all those who work with children are robust and checked regularly by governors.

Very few parents responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, during the inspection. Those who did all agreed that their children were safe. The same views were gained from staff and most pupils who responded to the online surveys. In addition, pupils who I spoke with said that each class had their own 'worry box' where pupils could post any concerns. They also told me that bullying was very rare and if it happened they were confident it was dealt with effectively by adults. However, I discussed with you a very small number of pupils and parents who still feel that their concerns had not been fully dealt with. You agreed that all pupils should feel listened to and you assured me that their concerns would be dealt with

as a matter of urgency.

### **Inspection findings**

- You were quite rightly disappointed with the 2017 end of key stage 2 results, in reading. Although pupils made progress broadly in line with national averages, their attainment was below at the expected and higher standards. You explained that high pupil mobility had been a factor with this particular year group, but nevertheless recognised that you needed to improve pupils' achievement in reading across the school.
- Phonics is taught well across the school. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 is increasing year on year. In 2017, scores exceeded the national average and initial results suggest that outcomes are good again this year. Most of the pupils who did not reach the expected standard this year were new to the school or had complex needs and needed more time and support to catch up. Those pupils I listened to read aloud were using taught strategies well to read difficult words.
- Your focus on developing pupils' vocabulary helps them to gain a deeper understanding of a text. Teachers encourage and model the use of more exciting or precise vocabulary to convey meaning. In lessons, pupils are routinely asked to discuss with each other their understanding and are expected to reflect on the accuracy of their word choice to justify their reasoning with more clarity. This has helped them to articulate well their responses with greater confidence.
- Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop more complex reading skills. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils studying 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' were able to read between the lines to help them draw conclusions to gain a better understanding of the character, motive and plot.
- It is clear that your actions have led to significant improvements in pupils' achievements in reading. More pupils than last year have made good progress from their starting points. Initial test results indicate that more pupils are meeting the expected and higher standards, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils, by the end of Year 6.
- In response to the previous inspection findings, you have successfully raised standards in the quality of teaching and learning of writing. You were able to show me that through leaders' monitoring of attainment and progress, pupils are making sustained progress over time in key stage 2. You anticipate that more pupils will reach the expected and greater depth of attainment this year.
- Pupils demonstrate that they are able to apply confidently their grammar skills across a range of writing types by having plenty of opportunities to write purposefully in subjects such as history, geography and science.
- The school's chosen approach to teaching writing has had a significant impact in the younger years, particularly in key stage 1. Evidence suggests that over this year, current pupils have made good and sometimes better progress improving on last year's attainment. As a result, attainment at the end of key stage 1 and 2 is likely to rise at both expected and greater depth.

- Discussions with pupils and scrutinising their work shows that reading and writing are intrinsically woven throughout your curriculum. For example, their poetry about Auschwitz showed empathy and sensitivity and linked well with their study of 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas'. Pupils I spoke with were able to maturely discuss the story and relate it to the impact of war. As a result, pupils demonstrated that they can apply their reading and writing skills effectively, while building on their existing knowledge and developing their skills further.
- In some lessons, not all pupils were being given tasks that challenged them sufficiently to make the progress of which they are capable. You agreed that teachers need to match tasks more closely to the ability of their pupils particularly in the case of the most able and move them on quickly when they show that they are ready.
- You monitor and analyse absence data closely and have taken effective action when necessary. However, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is too high. You were able to show evidence where some pupil absence was unavoidable. You and your governors have made great strides to actively engage more parents and carers in school life and in their children's learning. However, you recognise the value and importance of encouraging meaningful, parental involvement to help reduce absence and agree that further work is needed.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers move pupils on when they are ready more quickly in lessons
- they continue to develop the skills of subject leaders so that they are able to support staff to raise standards in their subjects
- they further develop the partnership between school and families so that parents feel confident to support their children's learning while ensuring that their children attend school regularly.

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

Yours sincerely

Cindy Impey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We discussed the lines of enquiry for this inspection, areas for further improvement and information about current pupils' attainment and progress. I visited most year groups and held meetings with you, senior leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority. I spoke with pupils informally and I also spoke with a number of parents at the beginning of the school day. I examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils. I gathered a range of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and assessment particularly in English. This included joint meetings with you, your deputy headteacher and subject leaders of English. I looked at a range of pupils' work and a range of abilities. The views of 28 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered as well as 27 responses parents made using the free-text service. I also considered 88 responses from pupils and 30 responses from staff.