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Mr D Magner
Headteacher
The Milford Academy
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Dear Mr Magner

Short inspection of The Milford Academy

Following my visit to the school on 21 June 2016, 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 2012.

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 your leaders are developing an exciting learning culture where all pupils are expected to make at least good progress over time. Your high ambitions are reflected in the seven Milford values, with learning at the heart of everything you do. You and your team are passionate about helping your pupils to understand that the investment they make in their education now will have a significant impact on the rest of their lives. Consequently, pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and are fiercely proud of Milford Academy.

The areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been tackled effectively. You and your senior team have an open, honest and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas needing further work. This ensures that weaknesses are remedied and results in improved outcomes for pupils. You are rightly aspiring to become an outstanding school and are making strides in this direction.

You are not afraid to challenge weak performance. Teachers' work is checked regularly to ensure that pupils' learning, progress and well-being are always in the limelight. The impact of this action can be seen in pupils' enthusiasm for learning and their good rates of progress.

Since the previous inspection, you have steadily improved the outcomes for children in the early years and improved the proportion of pupils reaching nationally expected levels at the end of key stages 1 and 2. You are also successfully closing the gaps in attainment for disadvantaged pupils. These successes demonstrate the impact of good leadership and the school's capacity for improvement in the future.

You and your leaders have rightly identified that, although standards in reading have improved over the past two years, pupils often have a limited vocabulary and lack inferential skills. This has been a priority for school improvement this year. The development of a new, stimulating and well-resourced school library has been a key component of your strategy to raise standards in reading even further. As a result, pupils are becoming confident readers who enjoy reading at school and at home.

Parents are highly supportive of the school. You actively encourage parents to become involved in their children's education. Parents welcome opportunities to attend workshops and to visit lessons. Parents speak highly of the care and support that characterise the school both academically and pastorally.

The information published on the school website about the curriculum and the way in which the school spends the sports premium funding does not currently meet the requirements set out by the government.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. The school's current safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of high quality. All staff undertake regular and extensive training in all aspects of safeguarding. They are currently undertaking training on the prevention of radicalisation and extremism. As a result, all adults have a clear understanding of potential risks and can identify and report early signs.

Pupils are taught effectively about ways of keeping themselves safe. They have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take and know who to talk to if they have any concerns. Pupils are adamant that incidents of bullying are extremely rare in their school. The school's own records confirm this and show that any reported incidents of misbehaviour are addressed swiftly by the staff. Pupils, staff and parents agree that behaviour at the school is good.

Inspection findings

- You and other senior leaders work effectively as a team. You ensure that the responsibility for the school's improvement is a shared one and includes staff, pupils, parents and the wider community. As a result, the school is a strong and cohesive community where all pupils succeed.

- Middle leaders are blossoming as a result of effective training and development this year. They are taking a more active role in checking the quality of teaching and learning, providing effective support and challenge to their colleagues and acting as good role models. Consequently, they are in a stronger position to drive whole-school improvement and you are developing further capacity to improve.
- The governing body is a dedicated and skilled group who know the school well. Governors use the detailed insight they gain from their regular visits to the school astutely to hold you and other senior leaders to account.
- Children in the early years make good progress from their various starting points. This is because the early years leader has a secure understanding of how young children learn. She and her team work successfully in continual improvement of the provision and ensure that children develop a love of learning from their earliest days in school. For example, the learning environment is thoughtfully organised, both indoors and outdoors, with a wealth of opportunities which excite and capture the children's curiosity and their natural instinct to learn. As a result, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is rising.
- Teachers know their pupils extremely well. They set high expectations and plan interesting learning activities which capture pupils' interests. Teachers are generally using assessment information effectively to identify and plan for pupils' needs in each lesson. However, sometimes the work is not challenging enough and pupils are not always pushed to take the next steps in their learning. When this happens, pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.
- The English leader has successfully led the initiative to raise standards in reading this year and is creating a strong reading culture throughout the school. This has resulted in improvements in standards in phonics for pupils in the Reception and Year 1 classes, as well as in reading in all year groups. There is a relentless focus on every pupil becoming a confident reader who is 'secondary ready' by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils enjoy a curriculum which is planned around topics and themes which motivate and inspire them. Regular visits, visitors, homework and extracurricular clubs enrich pupils' experiences further. For example, pupils in Year 6 recently visited the Queen's Medical Centre in Nottingham to learn about what to do in a medical emergency. Pupils spoke with confidence about the life-saving skills they have learned.
- The extremely popular after-school club makes an excellent contribution to developing pupils' learning and social skills. The club reflects the school's principles of respect, responsibility and resilience. As a result, it effectively supports the school in preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. A range of other after-school activities provides pupils with regular opportunities to participate in sports and music.
- Pupils' behaviour around school and their attitudes to learning are good.

They are polite to adults, greeting them warmly and opening doors for them. The school is an extremely bright and welcoming place. Displays are well maintained and respected, there is no litter and pupils use the well designed outdoor spaces well to play, talk and have fun.

- You and your staff share a strong commitment to improving the life chances of disadvantaged pupils. The careful tracking of pupils' progress and the high-quality support of the achievement manager are driving this work. As a result, gaps in attainment for disadvantaged pupils in the early years and in key stage 1 are closing rapidly. The gaps are narrowing in key stage 2 with particular success in writing. However, you recognise that there is more to do in key stage 2 to ensure that disadvantaged pupils catch up with their peers in reading and mathematics.
- There are extremely positive relationships between all pupils and adults in the school. The school promotes equality of opportunity successfully and does not tolerate discrimination of any kind. The development of British values is strong. Pupils take part in democratic processes such as the election of representatives for the 'Voice of Milford'.
- All parents who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online survey) said that their child is happy at school. The very large majority of parents said that the school is led and managed well and that pupils behave well. The school's website does not provide parents with required information about the curriculum and sports premium funding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the remaining gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in key stage 2 are closed in reading and mathematics
 - the level of challenge in activities is appropriately judged to stretch pupils' learning
 - the school's website includes the required information about the curriculum and the primary sports premium funding.

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

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, four middle leaders and a group of pupils. We conducted a tour of the school together to observe teaching and learning in all classes. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at breaktimes and during lessons. I met a number of parents informally at the end of the school day and considered the views of 28 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I considered a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies.