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Mrs S Gough  
Headteacher  
Monksdown Primary School  
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Merseyside  
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Dear Mrs Gough

### **Short inspection of Monksdown Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 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 September 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 work effectively with senior and middle leaders to ensure that pupils enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum. Staff share your high expectations and are fully committed to providing pupils with learning that excites and engages them.

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent view, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were highly complimentary about the education provided by the school. One comment, reflecting the view of the majority, noted, 'We are happy about Monksdown Primary School. All teachers are very supportive, kind and concerned about every pupil's progress.'

The pupils who I met during the inspection were very proud of their school. They spoke with understanding about their school values of respect, resilience, resourcefulness and responsibility. They were also able to explain how these values help to promote equality and diversity.

In the previous inspection, the inspectors reported that further work was required to ensure that the most able pupils in school are being suitably challenged. You have worked effectively with leaders to address this issue. A new assessment and tracking system has been introduced. This enables staff to monitor the progress of all pupils and offer appropriate support. The range of resources recently purchased support the most able in challenging their own learning. As a consequence, the school's most-recent published information at the end of key stage 2 shows that the

attainment of the most able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics has increased and is now broadly in line with that seen nationally. Inspectors also noted that teachers needed to increase pupils' ability to spell correctly and ensure that they use more imaginative vocabulary in their writing. This has become a focus for your school and the necessary improvements have been made. Pupils' spelling is much more accurate and the work produced in their books shows an increase in the use of imaginative vocabulary. The school's most-recent published information at the end of both key stages 1 and 2 shows that performance in spelling is now broadly in line with that seen nationally.

Finally, the inspectors highlighted that leadership and management required further development. This was to ensure that governors were more effective in challenging leaders about pupils' progress. Again, you have addressed this issue. Governors receive detailed training from the school's local authority improvement partner. This enables them to understand the progress information that you now provide for them. Minutes of governors' meetings show that governors are effective in challenging leaders on areas of school improvement. The governors who I spoke to during the inspection were able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

We discussed areas where further work is required to support your school improvement. You work hard to ensure that attendance rates remain high. However, we agreed that further work is required to reduce the levels of persistent absence. You have introduced changes to ensure that reading and writing are developed throughout school. As a consequence, improvements have been made and progress is now good. Nevertheless, the number of pupils achieving at the expected and higher levels in reading and writing at key stage 1 needs to improve further to reflect that seen nationally. Finally, further improvements are required in the number of pupils at key stage 2 achieving the higher levels in reading and the expected and higher levels in writing.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's grounds are secure and well maintained. Visitors are briefed on the school's safeguarding procedures when they enter the building. New members of staff receive detailed induction to ensure that they are fully aware of the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that families receive the support they require in areas such as attendance, child protection and welfare.

Pupils I spoke to during the inspection demonstrated a very clear understanding of the ways in which their teachers help to keep them safe. They also understand their responsibilities in relation to keeping themselves safe both online and in the real world. Staff undertake regular training on safeguarding and, as a result, are aware of the procedures should they suspect that a child is at risk from harm.

## Inspection findings

- During the inspection I discussed with you a number of lines of enquiry. The first concerned efforts made by leaders to ensure that pupils make good levels of progress in reading throughout school. Children enter school with communication and language skills which are below those seen nationally. Leaders and teachers ensure that these children are provided with high-quality reading texts to excite their imagination. Additionally, children receive focused teaching of phonics to ensure that they are able to sound out words correctly. For example, during the inspection children in a Reception class were able to tell the story of Rapunzel in a highly effective manner. As a consequence of this focused approach to teaching, children are making good progress in reading in the early years.
- You are aware that many pupils do not have access to a wide range of books at home. To address this issue, teachers ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to read widely and often in school. You have created a new school library to improve the quality and choice of books for both pupils and their parents. This has raised the profile of reading in school, ensuring that pupils read widely and often. Your pupil reading councillors are very proud of the fact that they chose the books for the library in consultation with other pupils.
- In key stages 1 and 2 pupils are taught reading via high-quality texts. Learning is structured to develop pupils' comprehension skills. Much improvement has been made in this area and, as a consequence, the school's most recent published information shows that pupils make good progress by the end of key stage 2. However, leaders are aware that attainment at the end of key stage 1 at both the expected and the higher levels remains below that seen nationally. Additionally, key stage 2 performance information shows that, while pupils are attaining well at the expected level, their performance at the higher level remains below that seen nationally. We agreed that further work is required to develop further pupils' ability to read for understanding at both key stages 1 and 2.
- We also examined the effectiveness of leaders' efforts to increase the proportion of pupils attaining at the expected and the higher levels in writing throughout school. This line of enquiry was not a surprise to you and forms part of your improvement planning. As such, much has already been achieved in this area. Throughout school there is now a consistent approach to the teaching of writing, with pupils producing work of a good overall standard. This is most notable in the Reception Year where children's books show rapid progress. While leaders are aware that further time is required to embed this new system of teaching, they are justly proud that the school's most recent progress information for pupils at the end of key stage 2 shows that writing progress has improved and is now broadly in line with the level seen nationally.
- You have had some success in reducing the high persistent absence rates of pupils. Leaders inform parents of the importance of ensuring that their children attend school regularly and on time. Teachers reward pupils for good attendance, providing them with points and certificates. Your attendance officer works closely with an education welfare officer to monitor those pupils who are not attending school regularly. The school minibus is available to pick pupils up in the morning and a breakfast club is also available for children to ensure that they arrive in

school on time. Leaders identify that a significant number of pupils are being kept off school unnecessarily and some families are taking unauthorised holidays. Such absences are dealt with in an uncompromising fashion. As a consequence, leaders have seen significant reductions in absence for the families that have received support. Nevertheless, persistent absence, while reducing, is still too high and we agreed that this remains an area of priority for the school.

- You provide all pupils with a broad range of experiences to capture their interests. This begins the moment they enter your Nursery, where provision is interesting and exciting. Teachers celebrate pupils' skills, for example nominating 'Linguist of the Month'. They also ensure that pupils undertake a wide range of visits to put their learning into a wider context. Pupils have the opportunity to represent their school as school councillors, reading councillors and digital leaders. Your extensive grounds are used highly effectively. Pupils greatly enjoy working in the allotment, growing vegetables which are used in cooking and as part of lessons. This breadth of experience and improving basic skills prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the changes to writing implemented in school are further embedded so that more pupils reach the expected and the higher standards in key stages 1 and 2
- overall standards of reading are improved by further developing reading for understanding throughout key stages 1 and 2
- persistent absence rates are reduced by ensuring that families understand the importance of their children attending school regularly and on time.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher. I also met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with the designated safeguarding leader, the attendance officer and the education welfare officer. I met with leaders for English, mathematics, science and early years. I also spoke with a local authority improvement partner. I had a formal discussion with a group of pupils and met with your school administrator.

Accompanied by you, I visited all year groups in the school. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I scrutinised examples of pupils' work and reviewed documents, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. I also examined the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan and assessment information. I took account of the 34 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 42 responses from the staff survey. I also considered information posted on the school's website.