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Mrs Linda Garbett
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Garbett

Short inspection of Mithian School

Following my visit to the school on 21 June 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As headteacher, you lead the school with determination and clear purpose. With wise support from governors and senior multi-academy leaders, you have established a strong and highly motivated staff leadership team. Together, and with the full backing of parents and carers, you have set the school on an ambitious path of improvement.

The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed their appreciation of the work of the school. Typically, one parent wrote, 'I have been so pleased that my children have had the opportunity to attend this school. The teachers are dedicated and motivated.'

Mithian is a welcoming, caring school where pupils achieve well both academically and personally. You are elevating the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics from a weakness to a relative strength. This bears testimony to your secure capacity to bring further improvement.

The school has several strengths. In reading, for example, achievement across the school has been consistently strong for several years. From their different starting points, most children make rapid progress during their time in Reception. This is due to the vibrant and stimulating quality of the teaching and learning experiences provided for them. Close and supportive relationships between adults and pupils and among the pupils themselves flourish. This underpins the typically harmonious learning in all classes. The staff team is going from strength to strength as a result of your guidance and governors' support of their professional development and

well-being. You maintain strong links with colleagues in schools across the multi-academy trust. This builds on the school's strengths and is helping to further quicken pupils' progress.

You provide a well-planned and rich curriculum at the school. Teachers plan interesting experiences for pupils, especially outdoors, where sport and activities such as gardening enthuse pupils in learning from an early age. Pupils are also involved in suggesting ways of improving the school. For example, they have prompted the creation of an area where quiet contemplation can support both breaktimes and learning activities. Pupils say, 'Our ideas are valued and teachers try to do the best for us.'

Safeguarding is effective.

A culture of safety and welfare pervades the school. This stems from the pupils themselves who say, 'We feel safe at school because so many people care about us.' When questioned, pupils in both key stage 1 and key stage 2 show that they know how to stay safe and are particularly explicit in describing how to use computers safely.

Leaders, with the full support from specialists across the multi-academy trust, ensure that all safeguarding practices and procedures meet statutory obligations. These include, for example, comprehensive records and checks of staff and all others who spend time in the school.

Leaders, including governors, check records, policies and procedures regularly to ensure that these are kept fully up to date. Leaders also make sure that their own training in safeguarding and that of staff meet current requirements. For example, all staff are well briefed on the 'Prevent' duty and other procedures put in place to protect pupils from risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. All staff have a clear understanding of the actions to take and whom to contact should they have concerns about pupils' welfare. The staff's clear knowledge of individual pupils and their families is a key element in securing their ability to keep pupils safe.

Parents, staff and pupils who responded to the online surveys were unanimous in agreeing that the school keeps pupils safe. As one family typically wrote: 'We are especially grateful for the warm and nurturing social environment which has provided such a firm, safe foundation for our child's emotional and social maturity.'

Inspection findings

- Results in the national assessments at the end of key stage 2, although improved in 2017, showed that the progress pupils made in mathematics was still not as good as that in reading and writing. Consequently, I firstly examined the effectiveness of leaders and teachers in improving the progress of pupils in mathematics, especially that made by girls. Since the disappointing result of 2016, you have rightly prioritised the improvement of mathematics across the

school. You have tackled this issue with rigour and determination. You have employed the wealth of expertise across the multi-academy trust and within the school to radically strengthen the teaching of mathematics across the school.

- You have taken a number of effective actions to advance pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. These include additional training for staff in teaching mastery in mathematics and prioritising the development of pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills. Teachers have increased the level of challenge and stimulation in the work presented to the pupils and are typically expecting pupils to explain their thinking. Additional actions, such as extending pupils' understanding of mathematical terms and making learning activities more interesting, have boosted pupils' confidence. Extra teaching in small groups has also accelerated pupils' progress. For example, in response to strong teaching, all pupils in Year 6 are working at least at levels expected for their age.
- Currently, one third of the pupils, an improved proportion from last year, are demonstrating greater depth in their understanding. Similarly, strong teaching is increasingly evident across the school, with pupils readily stating that mathematics is their most improved and often most enjoyable subject. Current standards show that this momentum of improvement is being sustained.
- Next I examined the work of leaders and teachers to develop pupils' writing, especially that of boys. Teachers in all classes sustain a successful emphasis on extending pupils' vocabulary. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Years 1 and 2 showed good skills in using computers to undertake research about 'favelas', the Brazilian shanty towns. The pupils then responded well to the teacher's questions and used their widened vocabulary to discuss the limited materials that people had to use to build their homes.
- Teachers similarly inspire pupils to write both descriptively and expressively through stimulating topics. For example, following a visit to Newquay Zoo, pupils in Years 3 and 4 were engrossed in writing a fictitious report about an animal escaping. There is some variation across the classes, however, in the effectiveness of the teachers' development of the pupils' ability to spell words correctly. A scrutiny of pupils' written work in their books shows that too often, pupils are repeating spelling mistakes. Other pupils are sometimes not able to spell some of the interesting words that come to their minds. This restricts their ability to write fluently and confidently. The rich quality of pupils' imaginative writing is sometimes undermined by these spelling errors.
- Next I looked at what leaders have been doing to secure consistently strong teaching and learning across the school. Over the past two years, you have sustained an effective and confidence-boosting drive to further enrich the quality of teaching and learning in the school. You have made full use of the wide breadth of expertise available across the multi-academy trust and within the school to strengthen leadership roles and deepen staff subject knowledge. This has raised leaders' ability to check and ensure that their actions quicken pupils' progress. These developments have also improved staff's skills in questioning pupils and providing the feedback and next-step guidance they need to deepen their thinking.
- These aspects were evident during the inspection. For example, children in

Reception responded both thoughtfully and enthusiastically to the teacher's challenging questioning to rapidly develop their phonic understanding. The teacher's probing questioning in Years 5 and 6 supported pupils in reflecting and deepening their ideas. For example, pupils thoughtfully considered and discussed how branding might enhance the sale of products such as motor cars. As a result, pupils in all classes show a good understanding of what they need to do next to improve, engage well in their work and make good or better progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strong teaching of mastery in mathematics is sustained so that all pupils achieve their full potential
- the teaching of writing also includes an effective focus on improving pupils' ability to spell words correctly as they move through the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other staff who have leadership responsibilities. I met with senior representatives of the multi-academy trust and the chair and other members of the local governing body hub. I visited classrooms with you and the mathematics leader. We collected and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils during visits to classrooms and listened to teaching assistants hearing pupils read and talking to them about their reading. I also questioned pupils to ascertain their views of the school. I observed lunchtime arrangements and talked with pupils. In addition, I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, pupils' progress and school self-evaluation and development. I took account of 65 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 40 additional written comments from parents. I also took note of 11 responses to the staff questionnaire and 49 responses from pupils.