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Mrs Carole Catley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Catley

Short inspection of Deansbrook Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 2017, 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together, you and your leadership team continually strive to improve outcomes for the pupils. Your tenacious leadership leaves no stone unturned in identifying where improvements are needed, putting effective action in place and monitoring its impact. You have kept staff strongly focused on identifying and tackling barriers to learning faced by individual pupils. You have also made sure that they identify and challenge the most able. Consequently, pupils continue to make good progress.

You and your team have tackled successfully almost all of the matters arising from the previous inspection and those that have emerged subsequently. You swiftly changed the teaching of mathematics in response to weaker attainment compared with that in reading and writing. Not only are pupils securely mastering new skills, but they are also challenged through activities promoting greater depth to their understanding. This is already having a positive impact on their progress, and learning is much enjoyed by pupils. Your action has also improved phonics teaching to such an extent that attainment at the end of Year 1 has risen to above average.

The governing body makes a strong contribution to school improvement. Governors bring a wide range of expertise to the role. They use this to develop a clear understanding of the school from which to question and challenge leaders about its performance. They rigorously check the impact of action taken in meeting their goals for the school. Governors plan for the long term. They have carefully looked

at financial projections and acted quickly to ensure that a deficit is avoided and to keep finances on a stable footing.

You continually search for ways to increase parental engagement with the school so that parents can better support their children's learning and development. You are inventive in trying to work with those families who have proved harder to reach for whatever reason. Regular workshops are well attended, such as those helping parents of Reception children understand phonics. Invitations are then extended to parents who have not attended to give them the chance to meet in smaller groups. You are identifying 'Parent Ambassadors' from the main ethnic groups represented in the school to help generate confidence among their communities.

The local authority has maintained a close partnership, even though the school is not causing concern. This enabled a consultant to step in quickly to support the new early years leader. A further development, leading from this, has been the introduction of weekly challenge activities to extend the children's thinking.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, other leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding the pupils' welfare is at the heart of the school's work. You carry out staff training meticulously and follow this up with continual reminders of procedures. This keeps issues at the forefront of the minds of all staff so that procedures are understood and followed rigorously. Staff are vigilant, know what to look out for and report their concerns immediately to designated staff. The governing body monitors carefully that employment checks are correctly carried out and that staff implement policy rigorously.

Through your attention to detail, you and your team clearly understand the circumstances of vulnerable families and their children. Your careful recording of concerns enables you to quickly spot patterns. You have taken rapid action to safeguard the well-being of pupils when serious concerns have arisen. You report immediately to the local authority if you have concerns that a pupil might have gone missing when they leave the school.

Parents are confident that their children are cared for and kept safe in school. Pupils also said that they feel safe and show this by the confidence with which they work and play. Strong and constructive relationships mean there is always someone in whom they can confide. Pupils know how to keep safe when using computers and through age-appropriate fire and road-safety training.

Inspection findings

- The attainment of children eligible for free school meals in the early years and those who are disadvantaged, at key stage 1, has been lower than that of other pupils nationally. We agreed to focus the inspection on the effectiveness of provision for these pupils. Inspection evidence concludes that these pupils make good progress while at the school. Several work at greater depth in each subject. Factors such as language delay and limited social development on entry hold

back the attainment of some.

- You are quite aware of the barriers to learning and development of these pupils. Your strategy is built carefully on this understanding, and you particularly try to promote their social development and confidence so that learning can more securely take place. In addition, you are keen to engage with the parents of disadvantaged pupils. To this end, you fund the learning mentor to work with these families and run a parenting group and workshops.
- Play therapy is part of the strategy to develop identified pupils' social skills. The evidence shows that this improves their approach to learning and reduces incidents of misbehaviour. You have raised the pupils' confidence by their attending clubs such as chess and computing so they work in small groups. There is much to show that this has then improved classroom engagement. Reluctant readers read to a 'reading dog' each week. This is increasing their interest in reading and improving their skills.
- Funding for additional adult support in lessons is also having a beneficial effect. Teachers identify precisely what disadvantaged pupils should be able to do each week. This provides guidance for teachers and support staff on how to keep focused on the learning for specific pupils. Success in meeting these aims is continually checked and support is adapted. This also identifies where additional challenge is needed for some pupils. Books show several working at activities to extend their understanding, particularly in mathematics.
- The attainment of pupils who speak English as an additional language has been below average by the end of Year 2 in recent years. As this has lowered the school's overall results, I decided to make this an inspection focus. Many children enter the Nursery and Reception with very limited English language. I judge that the action you take to mitigate this is effective. Pupils generally become confident and fluent speakers of English by the end of Year 2. However, not all pupils have exposure to English language for long enough to close attainment gaps by the end of Year 2. These are those who may not hear English regularly spoken at home.
- Your strategy for tackling this starts when children enter the Nursery. They learn in an environment rich in talk and language. Teachers and support staff assess quickly the language needs of individual children and, specifically, how they are to tackle these through the week. A child's key worker undertakes a short focused programme on an individual basis. Early learners of English have much pictorial support around the classrooms both inside and out. This includes labels and other vocabulary displayed for all to see and referred to continually by staff.
- Children who speak some English language participate in an intervention programme, which significantly improves their confidence and fluency. They develop their talk about an activity over a fixed time period and present their speeches to others. Assessments before and after the programmes show that children make strong progress. Other identified Reception children receive focused individual support in developing their language. This includes work for children for whom English is their first language, but who have limited speaking skills.
- There is also generally a strong focus on language development across key stage

1. Teachers and support staff continually emphasise new vocabulary, correct grammar and sentence structure. They provide clear models of spoken English for pupils to follow. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their work with each other. They know they are expected to explain their answers when responding to questions from adults.
- The previous inspection required the school to raise attendance. Annual rates have fluctuated since then so attendance was a focus for this inspection. I judge that the action you are taking is having a positive impact. Attendance is rising, but some important mitigating factors cause absence to vary. These include outbreaks of early childhood illnesses such as chicken pox. Your learning mentor works to develop a positive attitude to the importance of regular attendance among parents when their children start in Reception. Some families do not respond to all that the school has tried, although this number is falling significantly.
 - You have robust procedures to encourage better attendance through rewards and incentives. These are regularly refreshed so they do not become stale. Leaders and staff rigorously check reasons for absence and make immediate contact with parents. This has helped to change the culture and importance of attendance among parents. Absence of vulnerable pupils is picked up immediately and dealt with by ensuring that the school is fully aware of the pupils' location. This can include visiting home if you are concerned about their whereabouts.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they act to strengthen parental engagement further and evaluate its impact in raising attendance and increasing progress, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- I met you, your deputy headteacher and other members of staff with leadership responsibilities. I met the chair of the governing body and five other governors. I also held a meeting with a local authority adviser.
- You and your deputy headteacher accompanied me when I visited parts of lessons. I also observed pupils as they moved around the school.
- I met with a group of pupils to discuss their experiences of school.
- I took account of the 60 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also took account of the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe and records of training and safeguarding checks.