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Ms Rae Potter
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Potter

Short inspection of Sarah Bonnell School

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 2018 with Heidi Swidenbank and Sophie Welsh, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

The school motto is 'Be Proud, Aim High, Work Hard, Be Nice, No Excuses'; staff and pupils live this motto to the full. Pupils are quite rightly very proud of their school and their own excellent achievements.

Together with the governing body and staff, you are ambitious for all your pupils. You set very high expectations and pupils respond by excelling in every area. You lead a strong and highly effective team of staff who support pupils in their academic and personal development. Pupils are confident and well-rounded. They care about their physical and mental health as well as their educational success. Pupils are articulate and are delighted to share their opinions and their work.

As a result of a broad curriculum and a wide range of extra-curricular activities, pupils are extremely well equipped to be successful in the next stage of their education. Careers advice and guidance for pupils is robust. Pupils are full of praise for way the school promotes healthy lifestyles. For example, they were able to describe the impact of a strategy to increase participation in sport on their own activity levels. On the day of the inspection, pupils were involved in an 'extended

learning day'. Year 8 pupils were visiting the Science Museum and other year groups were involved in special projects. The project work that pupils were doing during the inspection made them think deeply and apply knowledge from their lessons to come up with solutions to a range of challenging problems.

Since the previous inspection leaders have worked hard to maintain strengths and to improve areas which needed further development. In particular, leaders and teachers have been relentless in their drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils reflect on their learning. When teachers choose to ask pupils to work independently and/or in teams, they do so enthusiastically. Pupils say that teachers give them work that stretches them very effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is an exceptionally strong culture of vigilance to promote pupils' safety. Staff receive highly effectively training. All of the staff who met with inspectors could identify local risks and explain with confidence how they support pupils in avoiding such risks. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe because of the training they receive from teachers and external agencies. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

The school's work to keep pupils safe is exemplified by the 'digital leaders', pupils who are well prepared to train their peers on internet safety. During the inspection 'digital leaders' were teaching Year 7 pupils about the dangers of social media. Year 7 pupils then carried out research and presented projects with enthusiasm and deep understanding.

Governors care deeply about keeping pupils safe. They meet with parents and pupils to listen to their views on safety. Parents and staff who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaires said that pupils are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- As the first focus for the inspection, we agreed to look at the strengths of teaching and learning that contribute to pupils' excellent outcomes. The 2017 GCSE results show that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, had made excellent progress; as a result, their attainment was high across a range of subjects.
- School leaders have placed significant emphasis on teaching, learning and assessment. The result is that pupils speak confidently about learning and how to improve their work. There have been clear benefits from your decision to appoint pupils as teaching and learning ambassadors. Pupils value greatly the opportunity to train for this role; the outcome is that pupils lead their own learning extremely well, with support and encouragement from their teachers.
- Teaching in the school is consistently strong and supports the learning culture well. There is a strong emphasis on coaching to develop the quality of teaching. Teachers share good practice very effectively across the school and with local school partners. Leaders and teachers constantly review their practice in

teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that they are of consistently high quality. Even so, the school is not complacent; leaders and staff recognise the challenges involved in developing their practice to help pupils attain as well as they can in the new GCSE courses.

- The second area we agreed to focus on is the action taken by leaders to improve the progress of current pupils in mathematics. Although pupils' progress in GCSE mathematics in 2017 was much better than in 2016, it was not as strong as it is in English. Pupils' attainment in mathematics was average when compared to that of their peers nationally.
- Leaders are working very effectively so that pupils' outcomes in mathematics are now rising to meet the exceptionally high outcomes in English. They identify where pupils fall behind the high targets that have been set for them and ensure that teachers take prompt action to help them catch up. Considerable thought has been given to the teaching of mathematics, so that teachers use a wide range of strategies to support pupils' learning.
- Leaders have a strong understanding of pupils' attainment in mathematics. Leaders were able to provide carefully moderated information that demonstrates that current pupils are making much better progress in mathematics. Even so, leaders have identified the need to raise pupils' numeracy skills across the school. The school has had a successful literacy strategy in place that has contributed to the rapid progress that pupils make in English. The aim is that new leaders in mathematics will emulate this success.
- Third, we agreed to evaluate the progress of lower-attaining pupils. Although in 2016 and 2017 pupils with low prior attainment made good progress, they did not make the exceptional progress that pupils with middle- or higher-ability starting points made.
- Some of the pupils with lower ability have a specific learning need. Teachers with specific expertise in special educational needs have provided staff with training to adapt resources to support pupils with low starting points, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Teachers also provide additional and effective support in lessons for these groups of pupils. The school's assessment information shows that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are now making much better progress.
- Finally, we looked at the support that the school provides for the personal development and welfare of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This was because leaders' own evaluation is that provision for this group is exemplary.
- The school has an exceptional range of support strategies for the personal development and welfare of all pupils. They are taught how to develop strong resilience and mental health. For example, all pupils have opportunities to take part in outdoor pursuits, which they said help them manage stressful situations in their own lives.
- The school maintains a particular focus on the welfare of vulnerable pupils. Pupils said that teachers anticipate their stress and concerns and direct them to the school counsellors when they need help. The school also works very well with

many external groups to support vulnerable pupils.

- Pupils who have difficulty attending school can follow a bespoke timetable which builds confidence and quickly facilitates their return to full-time education in the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop pupils' numeracy skills so that outcomes in mathematics match the very strong outcomes in English
- they continue to evolve and develop teaching, learning and assessment to meet the changes in the new GCSE courses.

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

Yours sincerely

Dame Joan McVittie
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with governors, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, support staff and pupils. They reviewed documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' progress, their personal development and teaching and learning. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with the local authority representative.

Inspectors considered 13 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents, and 28 responses to the staff questionnaire. There was one response to the pupil questionnaire.