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Mr Stephen Jackson
Headteacher
Valley Primary School
Beckenham Lane
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Dear Mr Jackson

Short inspection of Valley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 November 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since being appointed headteacher, you have developed the roles of senior leaders so they play a full part in improving teaching and learning. You have also increased the role of middle leaders so they take responsibility for leading their curriculum subjects.

Governors know the school well and visit the school regularly. You provide governors with detailed information that they use to offer strong support and challenge. They contribute effectively to the school community and are focused on school improvement and achieving the best outcomes for all pupils. The trust ensures that senior leaders are supported and challenged.

You have worked closely with your senior leaders and governors to make the school a welcoming and safe place where pupils enjoy learning. Pupils are very proud of their school and speak enthusiastically about the many subjects they enjoy. They said that they were expected to work hard and teachers helped them if they experienced difficulties. One pupil said, 'Basically, you don't give up if something is really hard, it's called resilience.' There are opportunities for pupils to take on responsible roles within the school community. They said the school playtime mediators help everyone to enjoy breaks and get on together. They said that they enjoy learning music and having the opportunity to perform. However, the pupils said that they would like more art lessons.

The behaviour of pupils around the school and in lessons is good. They listen well and are interested in their learning. Pupils participate in group discussions and allow each other to take turns and offer their suggestions. They learn about democratic processes, for example

through the election of the school council representatives. Pupils learn about world religions and cultures, promoting tolerance and respect for differences.

Parents I spoke to say that the school communicates well and provides information on different aspects of their child's education. The parents of pupils in Reception classes said that their children had settled in very well and liked coming to school. One parent said, 'School makes sure all children settle in and they adapt to the needs of each child.' Parents believe that the school enables them to understand how to keep their children safe, especially online. They think that there are opportunities for their children to play a variety of sports or learn a musical instrument. However, some parents said that they thought there was too much emphasis on English and mathematics homework.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is effective. The headteacher, who is the designated safeguarding lead officer, along with leaders, has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements and records are of a high quality. Staff and governors receive annual training and regular weekly updates about current safeguarding practice. All staff know how to recognise warning signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm and how to report their concerns. Records are comprehensive and show that swift action is taken should the need arise. The leadership team's knowledge of families and pupils ensures that pupils are safe and well supported. Leaders with specific safeguarding responsibilities work closely with outside agencies to safeguard pupils' well-being.

Pupils' safety is of paramount importance to all. Pupils report that they feel safe in school and parents agree that they are safe. Pupils have a good understanding and knowledge of issues such as e-safety and 'stranger danger' and speak confidently about the school's safeguarding team. They think that school assemblies and class lessons on safeguarding help them recognise any dangers.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed that the first key line of enquiry would focus on how effective leaders' actions have been in ensuring that the early years curriculum meets the needs of children and prepares them for the next stage of their education. This was because there has been a change of leadership in early years and the school wants to ensure the consistency of learning across the three Reception classes.
- Leadership in the early years has been considerably strengthened and there is consistency of expectation across the three Reception classes. Classroom environments are bright and attractive and teachers engage children's interest and enthusiasm through well-judged learning activities. Children work and play together well. They are able to take turns and concentrate on their chosen activity. In all three classes both boys and girls talk enthusiastically about their activities.
- In all Reception classes the children were engaged in the story of 'The Gruffalo'. They were able to retell the story and talk about the Gruffalo stealing the mouse from their classrooms. Children displayed high levels of concentration when writing their sentences about the Gruffalo. They are able to use their knowledge of phonics to write simple sentences and they enjoy reading their sentences to other children and adults. The

teaching of phonics is very effective in classroom situations. However, there is still some work to do to ensure that all pupils are being appropriately challenged, especially in small-group situations.

- The second key line of enquiry focused on the wider curriculum and pupils' depth of knowledge and progression of skills. The leadership team is reviewing the progression of skills in all year groups to ensure that pupils have a deep knowledge and understanding of the wider curriculum. The information on the school website reflected a broad curriculum but did not indicate the skills and knowledge that pupils would learn.
- Pupils study a broad curriculum in both key stages, enriched by specialist teachers for music and German. Pupils take part in many sporting activities and have the opportunity to learn and perfect a range of skills. Pupils said that they enjoy singing, have weekly singing practices and also sing in assemblies. They said that there are many opportunities to learn different instruments and many particularly enjoy being members of the school's brass band and school orchestra.
- Science is now taught discretely. During science lessons, pupils are able to hypothesise, investigate and draw conclusions from their experiments. In pupils' books there is progression in science skills and pupils have a deep understanding of science topics. Pupils' books are well presented and pupils said that they particularly enjoy carrying out investigations and evaluating their experiments.
- Pupils speak enthusiastically about the different topics they are studying, even though they are unable, in many cases, to say what subject they are learning. This is especially true with regard to history and geography. In some instances pupils' knowledge and understanding is limited. There is a focus on a broad curriculum but pupils are not consolidating and deepening their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Finally we looked at how effectively leaders and managers have ensured that pupils understand how to keep safe. In the previous inspection this was an area for improvement. Keeping pupils safe is a school priority. Pupils are taught how to keep safe online. They know how to report any internet or electronic messages that cause them concern. They said that all staff in the school would act on any of their concerns. They spoke confidently about telling their parents or carers if they were worried by any online activity. In computing lessons pupils learn how to keep safe online and recognise any dangers.
- Assemblies on different topics help children stay safe. Pupils spoke about 'stranger danger' and how they would report any concerns. Parents said that the school enabled them to keep their children safe. They said that the school regularly runs safety workshops for parents and provides leaflets and that the school website gives helpful safety information. The school holds e-safety weeks to keep pupils well informed and ensure that they know how to stay safe from harm.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in the early years children's needs are assessed more accurately so that support and challenge is appropriate to the individual child
- the content and sequencing of the wider curriculum focuses on developing pupils' knowledge and progression of skills.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of Connect Schools Academy Trust and the director of children's services for Bromley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Frances Hawkes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the curriculum subject leader, four governors, the chair of the board of trustees of Connect Schools Academy Trust and the school's improvement partner. I evaluated the work in pupils' books with the deputy headteacher and curriculum subject leader. I visited classes from Pre-school to Year 6 with senior leaders to observe teaching and looked at pupils' work. I spoke to pupils in lessons and around the school. I also met with a group of pupils. I spoke informally to parents in the playground and also met with a group of parents. I took account of the 66 parent responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, 90 pupil responses and the 35 staff responses. I scrutinised documentation on the school's website, the school's self-evaluation documents and current performance information about pupils' progress. Records about keeping pupils safe were evaluated.