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Mr Ian Bennett
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Dear Mr Bennett

Short inspection of Downshall Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 2018 with Bola Soneye-Thomas, Ofsted inspector, 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This has been managed successfully during the school's expansion to three forms of entry, and at a time when more pupils join and leave the school during the school year than is normally found.

Leaders have successfully addressed the areas for development from the previous inspection. For example, leaders' work to improve attendance has had a positive impact. Attendance is now in line with the national average.

You and the senior leadership team have created a culture which nurtures all aspects of pupils' development. This is a happy and calm school. Pupils work hard and with very positive attitudes. They attend carefully to their teachers and to each other, reflecting the ethos of being a 'listening school'. This is evident in the high-quality discussions between pupils and in the swift responses to teachers' instructions. Pupils take pride in their work, which is well presented. This is shown not only in their writing but also in the way that they work on written number problems in mathematics, which is a strength across the school. Pupils told inspectors that they appreciate how their teachers help them as they challenge themselves to learn new skills. One member of the school parliament said that 'The support that teachers provide is amazing.' The school's ethos is also seen in its 'intergenerational project', which brings mutual benefits through links with an elderly group of local residents.

The school is working to develop the roles of the newly appointed middle leaders. Staff are enthusiastic in their roles and have had some training to develop their leadership skills. As yet, however, they do not have the capacity to lead subject development within the framework of the school's 'Head, Hand and Heart' curriculum. Further training is a school priority.

Parents hold leaders in high regard. They feel that their views are listened to and that communication is relevant and regular. One parent, typical of others, commented that leadership shows 'compassion and responsibility'. Parents agree that their children feel safe in school.

Governors have an accurate view of the school and share leaders' ambition. Their safeguarding training is up to date and they have a clear understanding of their statutory duties. They evaluate the school's assessment information to check pupils' outcomes and compare the school to national averages.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders have developed an effective culture for safeguarding pupils. Leaders, including governors, have ensured that the comprehensive safeguarding policy makes reference to the latest guidance on issues of public concern. The single central record meets requirements and is securely maintained. The governor with experience of safeguarding, who conducts regular visits to the school, closely scrutinises the quality of record-keeping. Where necessary, the school uses support from specialist professionals, including counsellors.

Pupils say that bullying is rare and teachers are very caring. They reported to inspectors that any member of staff can be approached with any concerns. They also said that teachers have worked hard to help them keep safe when online.

Inspection findings

- We first agreed to look at the progress pupils are making in reading and, in particular, whether their skills are systematically developed so that an increasing proportion can attain the high standard by the end of Year 6. This figure remains average overall, but declined from 2017.
- The teaching of phonics is secure, and an above-average proportion of pupils meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Pupils' skills in understanding what they are reading are not as secure, although a newly introduced comprehension strategy in the second term of Year 2 is beginning to have an impact on pupils' progress. Leaders have also introduced a new strategy for the teaching of reading in key stage 2. There is evidence that this is supporting the development of higher reading skills, although, here too, the full impact is yet to be shown.
- The second line of enquiry was to look at how the school uses the pupil premium funding to support the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils. At the end of Year 6 in 2018, there was a decline in the performance of this group of

pupils compared to the previous year.

- Governors and leaders have clear strategies to remove the barriers to achievement facing disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have analysed reasons for the dip in outcomes in 2018 and have made adjustments to provision for current pupils. They give due emphasis to pastoral care, which is strong, and to effective planning that meets pupils' needs. Inspection evidence shows that disadvantaged pupils are now making broadly the same progress as others.
- Finally, we focused on the school's provision for boys in the early years and key stage 1. This was because their achievement was below that of girls. In the early years, fewer boys than girls reached a good level of development in the areas of personal and social development and reading, and by the end of key stage 1, the attainment of boys was below that of girls, particularly in writing.
- Leaders have taken a range of initiatives to boost boys' progress, including working with external partners. In the early years, the outside area has been organised to engage boys and develop their social skills. Alongside this, new reading texts have been introduced to promote a love of reading and to develop boys' interests. Leaders' work to introduce new teaching strategies is at an early stage and has yet to show impact. This remains a school focus, particularly with attention to those boys who join mid-year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategies to improve the personal development and reading skills of boys should be consolidated and evaluated to show their impact by the end of key stage 1
- new approaches to reading are developed so that a higher proportion of pupils attain the high standard by the end of Year 6
- continued training equips middle leaders with the skills to raise the quality of teaching and standards in their areas of responsibility.

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

Yours sincerely

Sara Morgan
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and your leadership team, including a group of middle leaders. We held meetings with members of the governing body. We heard a

number of pupils read and met with the group of pupils who make up the school parliament. We visited classrooms, together with senior leaders, and looked at samples of pupils' work. We also met with a representative from the local authority.

We reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance, their plans for further improvement and information on pupils' current progress. We considered a number of policy documents and records, including those related to safeguarding. The views of parents were considered through discussions at the beginning of the school day and the 29 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, including written comments. We also considered the 63 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils and the 32 staff responses.