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Mr David Denchfield
Headteacher
Benhurst Primary School
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Dear Mr Denchfield

Short inspection of Benhurst Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 March 2019, 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have motivated your team and continued to drive improvement in each aspect of the school's work. And as a result of your highly principled approach, you have the trust and support of parents, carers and staff. Your evaluation of the school's work is detailed and accurate.

You are ambitious for the school and, together with the senior leadership team, you have fostered uncompromising determination for every child to succeed. Leaders model your high expectations for the staff and pupils. Staff know what is expected of them because leaders communicate the school's key priorities well. Staff believe that leaders do all they can to ensure that the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching staff. Together, you have sought to continuously improve outcomes for pupils. One particular area of focus has been your work to develop effective use of probing questions to improve pupils' understanding across the curriculum so that more pupils make strong progress.

Teachers have responded positively to your emphasis on improving the progress of groups of pupils who were not achieving as well as others. Leaders are using additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils appropriately. However, it is not yet having a consistent impact on pupils across year groups and subjects. You agreed that there is more work to do to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils by deepening their understanding across all subjects.

Your work to ensure that pupils are tolerant of the views and beliefs of others is highly effective. Pupils openly celebrate their own beliefs while demonstrating respect for the views, beliefs and religions of others. The behaviour I saw in lessons was exceptionally calm and purposeful. Pupils demonstrated excellent attitudes to learning and an eagerness for acquiring knowledge and deepening their understanding. Their conduct was exemplary.

Pupils appreciate and enjoy the family ethos of their school. They value highly the support provided to them by every member of the school staff, and the range of opportunities open to them. Several parents told me that the school provides excellent support for the whole family. This is testament to the value they place on the education that you and your team provide. They praise your work highly and give numerous examples of how their children have benefited from the school's provision and support. These include the art and sporting extra-curricular opportunities available to pupils. This supportive and caring environment forms the basis for your carefully thought-out approaches to ensuring that each pupil does as well as they can.

Governors know the school well and they work well with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust to identify areas for further improvements. They bring a broad range of expertise to the governing body and have the right knowledge and skills to challenge and support you and your team effectively. The information you provide for governors, combined with the visits they make to the school, ensures that they are well informed. This enables them to ask searching and helpful questions during meetings to explore the effectiveness of the school's work. Governors seek external views of the school's work and receive reports from across the trust.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff receive appropriate training at frequent intervals and are clear about their responsibilities for keeping children safe. Training includes identifying potential signs of abuse or neglect, as well as identification of the threats posed by extremism. Staff raise safeguarding concerns in a timely and appropriate manner. Leaders share information with parents and appropriate external agencies. Pupils say that they feel safe and know who to speak to if they have any worries. Parents agree that concerns are addressed promptly. The governing body oversees all safeguarding procedures effectively. The school's work to reduce absence has been effective.

Inspection findings

- For the first key line of enquiry, I focused on leaders' actions to maintain the good quality of education at the school since the last inspection. In 2018, reading and mathematics attainment at the expected standards was at or above the national average for the high prior attainment group and that writing was at or above the national average for middle and high prior attainment groups. At the end of key stage 1, attainment was above the national average in 2018 and a

very large majority of pupils met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check.

- Leaders are determined to provide a clear approach to improving the curriculum so that pupils gain a deep understanding of what they have learned. You have worked hard to strengthen all layers of senior and middle leadership and this has had impact on the improvements at the school.
- Leaders use external advice and support for continuous development and governors take part in 'health checks'. They monitor progress closely. They have worked hard to reduce teacher workload and increase confidence in pupils' ability to take responsibility for their learning.
- The second key line of enquiry focused on leaders' actions to improve pupils' progress in reading and mathematics in key stage 2. This is because in 2018, the progress rate in reading and mathematics was not as good as the previous year.
- I found that leaders have invested in high-quality reading and mathematics textbooks and these have helped teachers to plan and deliver lessons effectively. In mathematics, pupils practise their skills using the texts and reflect their understanding in their 'journals'.
- Leaders have used a range of continuous professional development to keep teachers' knowledge up to date. Leaders introduced a programme of 'shared reading' to good effect and this has had a positive impact on pupils' outcomes in reading. Pupils show confidence in their comprehension of texts. For example, the use of 'How I know' statements support teachers' assessment of what pupils understand in reading and mathematics lessons.
- Most of the time, teachers' strong subject knowledge is used to challenge pupils. Teachers provide pupils with thorough insights, which build on pupils' prior knowledge. However, sometimes teachers do not use probing questions to deepen pupils' understanding and these procedures need to be consistently embedded throughout the school.
- The final key line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of the curriculum in providing disadvantaged pupils with opportunities to gain a deep understanding of the subjects taught. This is because in 2018, disadvantaged pupils did not perform as well as others nationally.
- I found that leaders and other staff ensure that disadvantaged pupils and their families are well supported. Staff support pupils' academic and personal development effectively. The school puts effective measures in place to support pupils' self-confidence and focuses well on helping pupils to succeed.
- During my visits to lessons, I saw this good support in action. Inspection evidence shows that these pupils are making good progress from their starting points. Teachers' work with specific pupils is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and development.
- The additional lessons, including one-to-one sessions and a range of sporting activities, motivate disadvantaged pupils. Leaders continuously adjust the curriculum to ensure that teachers' planning inspires and meets the needs of all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils. This work is more effective in

mathematics, reading and writing. Leaders agree that across other subjects, teaching does not consistently deepen the understanding of disadvantaged pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently use opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding across the curriculum
- the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils improve further by deepening their understanding in all subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Havering. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Maureen Okoye
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited lessons to observe learning and to look at examples of pupils' work. Most of these visits were made jointly with senior leaders. I heard pupils read from Years 1, 2 and 6. I met with the headteacher and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, senior leaders, governors and the director of standards for the trust.

I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's development plan and self-evaluation, policies and records related to safeguarding, and information about pupils' behaviour and attendance. I considered a range of evidence related to governance.

The views of 106 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were considered. I considered the views of 10 parents at the school gate. The 37 staff responses and 104 pupil responses to Ofsted's survey were reviewed.