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Rebecca Mottershead
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Dear Mrs Mottershead

Short inspection of Church Hill School

Following my visit to the school on 18 January 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. You provide effective leadership and have the utmost respect of pupils, staff and parents. You have established a culture where every person is valued and respected. As a result, staff and pupils are proud to be part of the school. The leadership team supports you well and shows a determination to bring about further improvement. Governors have a range of expertise and are exceptionally well-informed. They have rightly challenged you to ensure that standards do not slip and have played a crucial role in maintaining the school's overall effectiveness.

You are honest and open about the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, you have an accurate picture of what the school does well and have rightly prioritised areas for improvement. You have successfully reversed a downward trend in the early years, and good teaching now ensures that children get off to a strong start. Recently you replaced the tracking system to provide more rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress across the school. This is starting to help staff to better identify any gaps in knowledge and skills and to plan their teaching accordingly.

The school is a small but close-knit community. There is a strong sense of family values, and relationships between staff and pupils are warm and caring. The school is highly inclusive. Pupils with all different types of need are welcomed and feel part of the school community. While parents are generally positive about the school, a

few would like better lines of communication or feel their children are not challenged sufficiently. I agree with them; these are two areas that are holding the school back from moving to the next level. Leaders know this too and recognise that the most able pupils are not always stretched to achieve the highest standards possible in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are doing well but some could do even better.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements for pupils are secure and reflect current statutory guidance. The single central record meets all requirements and is well maintained. Pre-recruitment checks on the suitability of all staff and volunteers are diligently carried out and leaders review these processes regularly. Records are detailed and of high quality. The governor responsible for safeguarding uses his considerable expertise and knowledge to train staff and leaders. As a result, they are well informed about current safeguarding practice, including, for example, the 'Prevent' duty, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Staff are swift to follow up any concerns and seek appropriate support from external agencies as necessary.

Pupils feel happy and safe in school. They say that they can talk to a member of staff if they have any concerns. The school teaches pupils how to stay safe in and out of school, including online. 'Family circle time' allows pupils in different year groups to mix and form friendships; instances of bullying are rare and are dealt with swiftly.

Inspection findings

- To test out the hypothesis that the school remains good, we agreed four lines of enquiry. My findings for all of these showed that leaders have acted effectively to maintain a good standard of education for pupils.
- The first line of enquiry explored the achievement of pupils in key stage 1. Attainment in all subjects by pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2016 dipped and was below national averages. The previous inspection report had also highlighted teaching and learning in these year groups as an area for improvement. Leaders had already identified key stage 1 as a high priority for the school.
- Leaders have analysed the outcomes for last year and put in place measures to support pupils to make better progress. They knew that the weak outcomes for Year 2 pupils in 2016 were a legacy of ineffective teaching. The school appointed committed teachers and made changes in the management structure. There is evidence that teaching is of a good standard in Year 1 and Year 2. The proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 has risen and is now above the national average.
- Current performance information and work in pupils' books indicates that pupils are on track to reach the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1. However, some pupils told me that they choose the easy tasks in class when given a choice. Leaders agreed that teachers could challenge pupils

more while being careful not to overwhelm them.

- The second key line of enquiry related to progress in reading in key stage 2. In 2016, progress in all key stage 2 subjects was in line with national averages. Comparatively, though, the outcomes for pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 were weaker in reading than they were in mathematics and writing. Since the last inspection there has been a real focus on writing and leaders have recognised that the same focus now needs to be applied to reading.
- This year, leaders have given reading a higher profile across the school. Staff have analysed reading papers and have developed their reading schemes to develop any potential weak skills in comprehension, such as inference and deduction. Teachers track individual progress carefully and put additional support in place when it is needed. A bid for extra funding was secured to purchase more suitable books, specifically for key stage 2 pupils. Pupils enjoy reading and appreciate the opportunities to listen to guest writers.
- Leaders are starting to see improved levels of attainment in reading across the school, not just in key stage 2. With a continued drive and commitment to develop pupils' reading, the school is working effectively to improve standards in reading.
- The third key line of enquiry we agreed to consider was attendance and persistent absence. Attendance overall was below the national average in 2016. However, staff and governors have quickly acted on this and have put strategies in place to work with pupils and families. This involves better communication with parents and carers when a child is absent and support from the educational welfare officer. Attendance figures have improved and are now above the national average.
- The final key line of enquiry explored the strategic role of the school governors. The governing body was restructured two years ago. Governors bring a wide range of skills to the board and have specific responsibilities.
- The governing body are an asset to the school and have strengthened the leadership capacity. Governors take their roles very seriously and are committed to improving standards through working collaboratively and strategically with school leaders. They analyse and review school performance information, provide robust challenge and work above and beyond their statutory duty as governors.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- levels of challenge are consistently high in lessons so that all pupils achieve higher standards in their work.

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

Yours sincerely

Jude Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and other school leaders. I met the chair of the governing body and four other governors. I had a discussion with the literacy and mathematics coordinators and also met with a representative from the local authority. I visited all classes, sometimes accompanied by you, and spoke to pupils. I evaluated the school's safeguarding procedures, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, attendance analysis and current performance information. I considered the responses to the Ofsted questionnaires from 90 pupils, 27 members of staff and 62 parents.