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Mrs Elizabeth Booth  
Headteacher  
Dalmain Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Booth

### **Short inspection of Dalmain Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 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 January 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last 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 specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

You have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the priorities for further improvement. You lead by example and are determined to improve the school further, having high expectations of what you and your staff can achieve. Your leadership has been highly effective and you are ably supported by a very capable team of senior leaders and expert teaching and support staff. You have created a culture of success by providing clear direction, and cultivating a collective responsibility and shared ambition among staff and pupils. Middle leaders are passionate about the subjects they lead. They are strategic in driving improvements within their areas of responsibilities. As a result, pupils' outcomes across the curriculum are consistently strong. In 2017, the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average.

Following the previous inspection, leaders were asked to further improve teaching and thus the achievement of all pupils. You tackled this strategically by involving staff and pupils in determining the most effective ways of strengthening teaching and learning. This has played a key role in ensuring that pupils make strong

progress over time. Staff also appreciate how you considered their work–life balance in the changes you have made.

At the previous inspection, inspectors also asked you to look at opportunities for pupils in key stage 2 to apply their numeracy skills to solve real-life problems. Across the school, pupils enjoy and excel in solving mathematical problems in real-life contexts. They also have highly developed mathematical reasoning skills. As a result, standards in mathematics are high. In 2017, the proportion of Year 6 pupils meeting or exceeding the age-expected standard was higher than in other schools nationally.

Despite the impressive progress made since the previous inspection, you are constantly seeking to strengthen the school and capitalise on its successes. You have very effective plans in place to build on the strong improvements that have already been made. You identify that, despite improvements, more needs to be done to ensure that the most able disadvantaged pupils are challenged to attain the high standard in writing.

You and your team have fostered a caring, inclusive and welcoming atmosphere in the school. Pupils' behaviour is impeccable and they are a credit to the school and their families. Pupils and staff get along very well. Parents and carers value the quality of education the school offers to its pupils. As one parent commented: 'The broad and balanced curriculum, combined with high expectations and academic rigour, has ensured my children receive appropriate challenge and excellent outcomes.'

Governors know the school well. They use their collective skills to offer effective challenge to school leaders. They are deeply committed to ensuring that pupils receive a high-quality education. They deploy resources strategically to support the areas for improvement. They fulfil their responsibility to ensure that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, have full access to an enriched curriculum.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, staff and governors share a common purpose to ensure pupils' safety. Pupils told me that they always feel safe in school. They say that they are confident to speak with any adult in school whenever they have any troubles or worries. They feel that the school site is safe and secure and that staff look out for them all the time.

Pupils are clear about what constitutes bullying. They told me that bullying rarely takes place but that if it happens, it is sorted out quickly and fairly. Pupils move in and out of the school building sensibly. They know how to keep themselves safe at school, at home and when online.

You have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All the school's checks and procedures meet statutory requirements. Child protection training for staff and governors is comprehensive and up to date. Through this

regular training, you ensure that staff fully understand their duties to safeguard pupils and are vigilant to signs that a pupil is at risk of harm. Any concerns are dealt with quickly and external agencies are involved as necessary. Governors take their statutory duties related to safeguarding seriously. They have put in place rigorous processes to monitor the effectiveness of the school's procedures to keep pupils safe.

## **Inspection findings**

- In our initial discussion, we agreed to look at writing as one of our key lines of enquiry. This was because the teacher assessment results reported in 2017 showed that Year 6 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, made below-average progress during key stage 2. School leaders have acted quickly to improve writing across the school. You have put in place plenty of well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop their skills by writing in different subjects and for a range of purposes. As a result of your focus in this area, progress and attainment in writing have risen considerably and are strong across the school.
- Work in books shows that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are attaining the standard expected for their age in writing. Most pupils are challenged sufficiently to produce writing at the high standard. However, disadvantaged pupils do not routinely apply their spelling, grammar, and punctuation skills accurately when they are writing. Sometimes, teaching does not challenge them enough. As a result, only a small proportion of disadvantaged pupils exceed the standard expected for their age in writing.
- For the second key line of enquiry, we agreed to look at pupils' outcomes in mathematics. Overall, progress in this subject has been strong over the last two years. However, in 2017 the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils in the Year 6 assessments were not as strong as those of their peers in other schools. You have wasted no time in tackling this effectively. This has included reviewing the whole-school approach to the teaching of mathematics to ensure it is tailored to the needs of all groups of pupils.
- Across the school, pupils make strong progress in mathematics. This is because expert teaching allows them to practise and consolidate skills in order to achieve mastery. In key stage 1, for example, pupils did not settle for addition and subtraction when asked to use calculation sentences to create numbers. Some pupils decided to use their knowledge of fractions and division to make numbers. This strong understanding of number and calculation extends to key stage 2. When talking to pupils in Year 6, they expressed their fascination for algebra, and they offered explanations on how knowing how to work out proportions helps them in real life. Current assessment information shows that a high proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are meeting or exceeding the standard expected for their age in mathematics.
- Finally, we looked at the wider curriculum. Leaders have dedicated time and expertise to design a rich, well-thought-out curriculum. Teaching in all subjects is underpinned by academic rigour. This ensures that pupils make very strong gains in their subject-specific skills and knowledge over time.

- In art, pupils explore a wide range of art forms and techniques, covering both contemporary and classical periods. For example, while studying the work of Picasso in Year 1, pupils created portraits using a combination of the artist's techniques and their basic understanding of colour. This is complemented by portraits in Year 4 where pupils use complex lines and hues to produce art work of excellent quality.
- Music education is at the heart of this school. From studying Mozart in Year 2 to Verdi in Year 6, pupils make strong progress in this area. In key stage 1, pupils develop their confidence in singing through a range of songs, chants and rhymes. A clear music curriculum enables them to sustain achievement in this area so that by Year 6 they are able to create their own composition, aided by technology. Older pupils are also able to read music notation to a high standard. Leaders, including governors, ensure that disadvantaged pupils benefit from free, high-quality music tuition.
- Achievement in the humanities is equally strong. The school's history curriculum allows for pupils to have a deep understanding of significant periods in the past. Pupils' writing in their topic books reflects a solid understanding of chronology, knowing where people and events fit in history. Leaders also take pride in the school's first-rate provision for physical education, which is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular sports clubs. Parents and pupils appreciate the school's sporting excellence.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching challenges the most able disadvantaged pupils sufficiently so that a higher proportion of them achieve the high standard in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Edison David  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection I discussed the work of the school with you and with members of the senior leadership team. I also considered 148 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. I analysed 101 responses to the pupil survey and 25 responses to the staff survey. I spoke to a number of pupils to discuss their

experiences in lessons, the extent to which they feel safe, and their views on learning and behaviour. I held discussions with a representative of the local authority. I met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I also considered documentation provided by the school and information posted on the school's website. I looked at the single central record of staff suitability checks, and the school's analysis of pupils' attendance. Together with school leaders, I visited classes to observe learning and I looked at samples of pupils' work across all subjects. I listened to pupils read from across the ability range.