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Mr Andrew Kilgour
Headteacher
Darrick Wood Junior School
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Dear Mr Kilgour

Short inspection of Darrick Wood Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 5 February 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and your leadership team have worked hard to create a caring and inclusive environment where everyone is valued and well looked after. As one pupil typically summed it up, 'This school is like a family where everyone cares.' Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire unanimously agreed that staff have a clear commitment to the happiness, well-being and education of each child. Pupils know and understand the values of respect, learning, friendship, kindness, equality and honesty and say that they use them to help them in their everyday lives. Pupils' behaviour is polite and courteous, and they are keen to talk about the school to visitors.

Staff know pupils well, and use this knowledge effectively to develop pupils' interests. Regular visits out of school and visitors to the school broaden pupils' understanding of the wider world. Pupils are keen to learn and work hard in lessons. School leaders have developed a broad range of enrichment activities, which include sports and drama. A particular strength of the school is the musical activities in which many pupils take part. These are further enhanced through a range of performance opportunities. Pupils who take part in these are proud of their achievements, which contribute well to their strong personal development.

You have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and what needs to be better. For example, you have identified the need to further challenge most-able pupils in mathematics through problem-solving and reasoning opportunities. Consequently, you

have introduced different approaches to address this. While improvements have begun, more work is needed.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, together with your staff and governors, have given a high priority to keeping children safe. As a result, children feel cared for and protected in an environment that is inclusive and nurturing.

The single central record is maintained to a high standard, and is regularly checked by school governors. Pre-employment checks are carried out in accordance with requirements to ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work in school. These checks are accurately recorded on the single central record.

Regular training for all staff ensures that they are fully up to date with current legislation. Clear processes are in place so that they know how to report a concern promptly. Safeguarding records are detailed and of a high quality. Records show that leaders carefully and swiftly follow up any issues, working well with outside agencies. These systems are supported well by regular briefings, which ensure that all staff are aware of current safeguarding issues. This enables staff to safeguard pupils' welfare effectively.

Pupils said that they understand about different forms of bullying, including online bullying. They said that although bullying incidents are rare, if they do have a concern, they know they can talk to a member of staff who will sort it out quickly. Pupils are taught how to stay safe in and outside of school. As a result, pupils said that they know how to make sensible choices, which help them stay safe. All the pupils I spoke to said that they feel safe at this school, and all parents and carers who answered Ofsted's online questionnaire agreed. Clear systems and effective practice result in a strong safeguarding culture at the school.

Inspection findings

- The first key line of enquiry we agreed focused on how successfully leaders support teachers to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in writing. This was because, in recent years, their attainment at the expected level and at greater depth was less than other pupils nationally.
- You and your leadership team have implemented approaches to secure progress. You have developed the curriculum so that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, have opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects. For example, one pupil wrote, in role, a letter about their experiences of mass migration, discussing the different foods and exploring how they felt about moving to a new country. These opportunities interest pupils and enable them to develop fluency and confidence in writing.
- Work in pupils' books shows that you have improved their handwriting and presentation, over time. Teachers challenge pupils to be more ambitious in their use of vocabulary and to spell difficult words accurately. As a result, many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, use a wider range of vocabulary. This means that their

writing has a greater impact on the reader.

- Assessment information shows that progress is uneven, with disadvantaged pupils in some year groups making better progress than others. This is because some pupils make persistent basic punctuation and spelling errors, which limits their progress. Leaders have taken swift action to improve this, but while some progress has been made, further work is needed to ensure that progress is more consistent.
- For the second area of enquiry, we focused on how leaders support teachers to improve the achievement of most-able pupils in mathematics so that it is at least as good as their achievement in writing. This is because, in the past, fewer most-able pupils achieved greater depth in the key stage 2 tests than the national average.
- You and your leaders have introduced new approaches to help improve outcomes and challenge the most able pupils. Work in pupils' books shows that the majority of these pupils are challenged well. Opportunities for reasoning and problem-solving are routinely given. Where progress is strong, pupils build on their previous learning and articulate reasons for their choice of method. For example, some pupils challenged each other to find the most efficient way to solve a problem. They were able to explain their choices articulately, showing a deep understanding of their learning. Some most-able pupils, however, are not sufficiently challenged. These pupils spend too long practising calculations that are too easy for them, which limits their progress. More work is needed to embed these approaches so that all pupils are challenged appropriately.
- Finally, we considered what the school has done to reduce rates of absence and persistent absence for the groups, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities with education, health and care plans. This was because in 2017 rates of absence and persistent absence for those groups were high.
- You have taken effective action to improve attendance. Staff monitor attendance carefully, and are quick to identify pupils for whom absence is a concern. Your team works closely with parents to understand why pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. They then offer support tailored to particular circumstances. You communicate your high expectations to parents through regular newsletters. Good attendance is celebrated in assemblies, and a range of rewards are offered to pupils to help promote regular attendance. As a result, rates of absence and persistent absence are now much lower than the national averages.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Most-able pupils are consistently challenged in mathematics through more opportunities to reason and solve problems
- gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally in writing continue to diminish, by improving the accuracy of spellings and punctuation.

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

Yours sincerely

David Lloyd
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the special needs coordinator, the school's business manager, the school improvement officer, three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and I spoke to a trustee. I visited six lessons with the headteacher. We reviewed work in pupils' books. We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and at playtime. I talked to a range of pupils informally in the playground. I talked to a range of staff. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, school self-evaluation documents, safeguarding records, information about attendance and information about current pupil achievement. I considered 58 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, and 25 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.