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Mrs Beverley Hewitt-Best
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hewitt-Best

Short inspection of Newham Bridge Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 June 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 the school was judged to be good in October 2015.

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 the deputy headteacher provide determined, dedicated and astute leadership. With the support of your staff, you have established a safe, caring school where pupils develop a love of learning through a broad and exciting 'creative curriculum'. The environment is attractive and stimulating; displays in the corridors and classrooms are vibrant, and teaching walls provide practical support and examples of good practice.

You know your school well and from the outset of this inspection you were able to give an honest and accurate self-evaluation of the school's strengths and priorities for further improvement. You and the leaders for English, mathematics and science work hard to ensure that effective strategies are widely shared to bring about further improvements. Although much has been done to improve provision, you have identified that there is still more to be done to ensure high-quality teaching across the school.

Members of staff who talked to me, and those who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey, said they are proud to work in the school and feel valued. They respect and value your leadership qualities and almost all say that the school has improved since the last inspection.

Parents are supportive of the school and this is evident in the comments made through Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. One parent commented: 'I would

recommend Newham Bridge Primary to every parent in the catchment area as the school is amazing, always making sure the children try to the best of their ability.' Parents who I spoke with informally at the beginning of the day were keen to praise the school. One remarked: 'This is a lovely school. My kids come home happy each day and always want to talk about what they have learned.' Many talked of the sense of community and the hard work of the staff, who they describe as always being approachable.

Pupils are rightly proud of their school, and enjoy the exciting range of lessons, extra-curricular activities and trips which the staff organise. Pupils highlighted particularly the time and care taken by the staff to get to know them as individuals. All of the pupils who I talked to said they would recommend the school to a friend.

Overall, pupils achieve well throughout the school. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is now in line with the national average. However, in 2018 the proportion of Year 2 pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was lower than the national averages. Leaders are now working to increase the proportion of pupils who reach the expected and higher standards by the end of Year 2. Although this is starting to pay off, this is still an area for further improvement. In key stage 2, pupils make good progress and this is reflected in the progress measures for reading and mathematics, which have been higher than the national averages for the past three years.

Safeguarding is effective

As the designated safeguarding leader, you ensure that all the necessary safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that all records are of high quality and meticulously kept. The school business manager ensures that all checks for the recruitment of staff are in place. All governors and staff receive safeguarding training on a regular basis.

You have prioritised the emotional welfare of vulnerable pupils and work closely with a therapeutic counsellor. A specialist teaching assistant also provides additional one-to-one support for vulnerable pupils.

Pupils' behaviour is good and attitudes to learning are positive. They feel safe and well cared for in school. They say that there is rarely any bullying but, if there was, it would be dealt with immediately. Pupils talk confidently about keeping themselves safe when they are using the internet. They were able to describe to me exactly what I need to do to stay safe online. A group of pupils known as 'Digital Leaders' provide other pupils with advice regarding safer internet use. Road safety training is provided for all, and pupils in upper key stage 2 have Bikeability training. Older pupils receive first aid training from the Red Cross and St John Ambulance.

Pupils' attendance is monitored assiduously by you and your office staff. In your development plan you have set a target of 96% attendance and you are determined to reach this. Presently, attendance is marginally short of this figure.

The views of the pupils were reinforced by their parents. Nearly all of those who responded to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire agreed that their child is happy, safe and well looked-after at school.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry concerned the standards of attainment reached and the progress made by pupils in key stage 1. Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils working at the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics has been consistently lower than the national averages, with few pupils reaching the higher standard. Therefore, I wanted to know what actions are being taken to raise standards. The key stage 1 leader, who is a local authority moderator, is aware of what needs to be done and was able to explain that considerable work has already been undertaken to improve teaching. Teachers have been given the opportunity to view strong practice in other schools and this is having a positive effect, which is reflected in the Year 1 results for the 2019 phonics screening check. The use of more challenging texts for whole-class guided reading has improved pupils' vocabulary and comprehension skills. In mathematics, there has been an increased focus on developing basic skills. An online mathematics project means that pupils can complete tasks at home with the support of parents. Increased moderation of work, both in school and with other local schools, means that staff are aware of the standards they need to meet. Although this area is moving in the right direction, there is still much work to be done and this is highlighted in your school improvement plan.
- My second line of enquiry focused on the standards of attainment reached and the progress made in writing across the school. Over the past three years, few pupils have attained the higher standard in writing in key stages 1 and 2. In key stage 2 pupils achieve well in reading and demonstrate a good understanding of grammar and punctuation, but achieve less well in writing. The leaders of English have introduced the 'Six steps to successful writing' across the school and this has ensured a consistent, systematic approach. Staff training and increased monitoring of teaching and moderation of written work are having a positive effect. The leaders of English have worked with colleagues from across the town to produce exemplar materials for each year group and these are being used to show colleagues in school what the expected standards look like. With regard to increasing the proportion of pupils who achieve the higher standard at the end of key stage 2, the leaders of English have provided nine model texts for the most able pupils to refer to. Across key stage 2, a strong writing culture has been established. Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to write with a purpose. It is clear that pupils enjoy their writing tasks. Accurate feedback, well-chosen resources, displays of good examples and peer support all encourage effective learning. Your own assessment information suggests that the proportion of pupils who will reach the expected standard and the higher standard at the end of key stage 2 in 2019 will exceed that of 2018. My analysis of pupils' work in books would support this view. In key stage 1 pupils are working hard to develop their writing skills, but progress is slow and only around half reach age-related expectations by the end of Year 2.

- During my visits to classrooms and while carrying out a scrutiny of written work, I noticed that many of the children in key stage 1 had not developed accuracy in their handwriting style. This meant that some writing was illegible.
- I was also interested to find out about the teaching of science across the school and, in particular, what steps have been taken to raise attainment in this subject. The leader for science is passionate about her subject and has a clear vision for the future of science in the school. She has worked hard to update the science curriculum and pupils now have the opportunity to carry out regular scientific enquiries. Increased observations of teaching and regular scrutiny of books have ensured consistency of provision across the school. Teachers now have systems to monitor the progress pupils are making and to ensure that all skills have been covered. Training for teachers has been accessed through the local authority and the Middlesbrough schools teaching alliance and this has had a positive effect. Pupils talked with enthusiasm about their work in science. Displays around the school and excellent work in pupils' books reflect the progress that has been made. During the past year, the school has been awarded the Science Quality Mark, which recognises high-quality teaching and learning. In my opinion, this is well deserved. In the past, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in science at key stages 1 and 2 has been lower than that seen nationally, but in 2019 pupil achievement is much improved.
- Despite low starting points, the proportion of children in the early years achieving a good level of development has risen slightly over the past three years, and is now just below the national average. Areas of provision, both inside and outside, offer many opportunities for the development of social, communication and physical skills.
- Over the past year, a number of new governors have joined the school's governing body. Those I met with were enthusiastic and committed to the continued success of the school. Through visits, they assure themselves that pupils are well cared for and safe. Presently, however, some governors lack an understanding of learning and assessment outcomes in core subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a continued emphasis on improving teaching and learning in key stage 1 with the result that a higher proportion of pupils reach the expected and higher standards at the end of that key stage
- there is a focus on the development of handwriting skills in key stage 1 with the result that pupils develop a legible handwriting style
- governors have a greater understanding of the curriculum and assessment information so that they can challenge and support school leaders more effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Knowles
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the leaders for English and science, the key stage 1 leader, the school business manager and three members of the governing body. I also discussed provision with the local authority adviser. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, the school's improvement plan, assessment data and the recent local authority review. I spoke with a number of parents at the beginning of the day and considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met formally with two groups of pupils from a range of year groups. The first group discussed safeguarding and behaviour with me. The second group talked about reading and I listened to them all read. I also spoke with pupils informally in lessons. You and I observed a range of learning across all classes, including phonics in early years and writing across key stages 1 and 2. I also visited the early years to gauge the quality of outdoor provision. During the afternoon, I carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work in English, science and topic from several year groups, and looked specifically at writing. I also analysed the responses from Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.