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Mr James Turvey
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Turvey

Short inspection of Tubbenden Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 November 2017 with Kanwaljit Singh, Ofsted Inspector, 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 March 2013.

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 leadership team, including governors, have a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Since 2016, the leadership of the school has been strengthened. This has contributed well to the wider leadership of the school. For example, subject leaders have an improved understanding of strengths and areas that could be even better in their subjects. As a result, pupils are making stronger progress across the school. However, you recognise that there is still work to be done to secure further improvements. For example, you acknowledge that pupils' use of punctuation in written work is not consistently strong and that pupils' spelling should be better. Your work is beginning to have an impact, but you agree that more work is needed for some groups of pupils to improve their progress in writing.

You and your leadership team are united in ensuring that the school is a nurturing community where everyone is valued. The school's values strongly promote this, and you have worked effectively to ensure that they run through the work of the school. Pupils understand the values and are keen to talk about them. Parents praise how well their children are cared for. As one parent said, 'Tubbenden is an incredibly caring school.' Pupils conduct themselves well both in lessons and around the school. They are polite, respectful and caring.

Pupils enjoy the curriculum and talk with interest about the after-school activities.

They enjoy a wide range of opportunities, including sports, music and modern foreign languages.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders, including the governing body, have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff have received appropriate safeguarding training and are reminded regularly about their duties in safeguarding pupils. Staff have a good understanding of issues affecting the school community and this helps them safeguard pupils' welfare effectively.

Clear processes are in place so that staff know how to report any concerns they may have about pupils' well-being. Records show that leaders address issues swiftly and work closely with external agencies effectively. The school's single central record of staff recruitment checks is maintained well and is regularly checked by those responsible, including governors. Leaders complete all the required checks to ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work in the school.

In lessons and assemblies, pupils learn about potential risks to their safety in a variety of situations. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know how to make sensible choices to keep themselves safe outside school. Pupils say that although incidents of bullying are rare, they understand the different forms it can take, including cyber bullying. Pupils are confident to speak to any member of staff and that their problems will get sorted out quickly.

Inspection findings

- The first focus of the inspection was to investigate how successfully leaders are supporting teachers in increasing pupils' progress in reading. This was because, in 2017, the proportion of middle-attaining pupils that achieved the expected standard at the end of key stage 1 was lower than the national average. Furthermore, the progress of the middle-attaining pupils at key stage 2 was not as good as in the year before.
- You and your leadership team have introduced a variety of strategies, including additional interventions, to secure improvements in pupils' reading outcomes. In lessons, pupils listen attentively to teachers' explanations of phonics and reading strategies. Additional adults are used effectively to support pupils, such as by questioning pupils and providing clear explanations. This support is used well by pupils when reading unfamiliar words.
- Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy reading and that they regularly read at home and in school. Pupils read with confidence and expression and observe punctuation accurately. Pupils use prior learning effectively to predict, talk about characters and to identify the key features of different genres. Older pupils can express opinions and preferences about authors and their styles of writing, which they said influences their choice of books to read.
- Assessment information and other evidence gathered during the inspection show that the progress of current middle-attaining pupils is strong.

- For the second line of enquiry, inspectors focused on how successfully leaders are supporting teachers in improving the progress of middle-attaining pupils in writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling. This was because in 2017, middle-attaining pupils made less progress in writing than they did in mathematics, and fewer pupils in this group achieved the national standard than in 2016.
- Assessment information shows that last year, middle-attaining pupils in some year groups did not make as much progress as pupils did in other year groups. Leaders were quick to identify this and have put strategies in place to secure improvements for those pupils.
- You are using the curriculum well to offer interesting opportunities for pupils to write at length and in other subjects. For example, some pupils evaluated Anderson shelters they had constructed using a range of vocabulary to accurately describe their work.
- In lessons, teachers use good subject knowledge to sharply focus questioning to improve specific writing skills. Work in pupils' books shows that this is resulting in some stronger progress being made by middle-attaining pupils. For example, the fluency of their writing is being improved by teachers successfully challenging pupils to use a wider range of vocabulary. However, pupils' spelling and use of punctuation are not consistently good and this limits the progress of some pupils. This has already been identified by leaders and you are seeing some improvements. However, you agree that more work is needed.
- Lastly, we focused on the impact of leaders' actions to improve pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence. We looked at the attendance of boys, pupils eligible for free school meals and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This was because in 2016, the rates of absence for these groups of pupils were higher than average.
- You and your staff have worked effectively this year to raise the profile of good attendance. You use a range of strategies to improve attendance, including rewards, such as certificates, film nights or prizes from a treasure box. Staff monitor attendance carefully, identifying pupils who are absent too often. You work closely with families to understand the reasons for pupils' absences and liaise with external agencies to support the work of the school. As a result, the attendance of these groups of pupils has improved. However, you agreed that more work is needed to further reduce rates of persistent absence for pupils eligible for free school meals.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' use of punctuation and spelling continues to improve so that pupils, particularly the middle-ability pupils, make better progress in writing
- the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals continues to improve and that persistent absence reduces further.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees, 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 headteachers, the inclusion leader, the school's business manager, and the chair and vice-chair of governors. Inspectors visited lessons with leaders. We reviewed work in pupils' books in key stages 1 and 2. Inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 1 to 6. We observed pupils' behaviour around the school and at playtime. We talked to pupils about their learning and talked to them informally in the playground. We talked with a range of staff. Inspectors evaluated a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation documents, safeguarding records, information about attendance and information about current pupils' achievement. We considered 185 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and 41 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.