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Mrs Maria Jay
Headteacher
St Michael at Bowes CofE Junior School
Tottenham Road
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Dear Mrs Jay

Short inspection of St Michael at Bowes CofE Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since the previous inspection, you have focused on developing the leadership team further. You said that this has increased leadership capacity across the school and allowed leaders, including middle leaders, to focus rigorously on areas for improvement.

In 2016, pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6 was below the national averages. You said that this was due to the increased demands of the new national curriculum. You and your team successfully tackled this unexpected dip in results through rigorous planning and a sharp focus on consistent teaching. As a result, pupils in key stage 2 made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017. In particular, the most able pupils' progress was consistently strong in all subjects. This was an area for improvement during the previous inspection. However, you and the leadership team correctly identify that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is still not as high as you would like.

You have identified the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills as a key priority to ensure that they make sustained progress across all subjects. In mathematics, leaders have successfully implemented new schemes of work that enable pupils to discuss and think more deeply about their work. As a result, pupils' progress in mathematics is particularly strong. Leaders have worked with a high degree of reflection to implement a new approach to the teaching of reading. An English team, which includes pupils, a range of staff and senior leaders works collaboratively to raise the profile of reading across the school. You have sought to enhance staff's subject knowledge in reading by using local expertise. This has seen

strong improvements to pupils' reading comprehension skills. However, this has not made the difference to lower-ability pupils' reading you had expected.

Governors have a secure understanding of the school. They are rightly proud of the school's Christian ethos, which is inclusive of those from all faiths and none. Governors place a high importance on the school's values, including co-operation and respect, to permeate through the school. As a result, pupils have high standards of behaviour and share the importance of school values well. Governors meet with senior and middle leaders to understand the difference that leaders make in their roles.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pre-employment checks are thorough, and staff have a strong understanding of the latest safeguarding guidance. For example, a staff member confidently shared their understanding of risks related to female genital mutilation and their statutory responsibilities to refer any concerns to the police. Leaders follow up any concerns robustly and use external agencies well.

Leaders have a thorough understanding of potential risks in the local area. For example, Year 6 pupils learn about the dangers of knife crime through workshops led by the local police. Pupils told me that they feel safe at the school and could identify a number of adults they could go to should they feel concerned. They value having caring staff who make them feel comfortable in sharing their views. Pupils have a strong understanding of how to stay safe online, including on social media sites.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and I agreed to look at two areas of the school's work. The first of these was in relation to the effectiveness of leaders' actions to raise pupils' achievement in reading. This was chosen because in 2017 the progress and attainment of Year 6 pupils in reading was not as high as that in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have successfully implemented a new approach to teach pupils reading comprehension skills. Teachers identify unfamiliar words in reading texts to ensure that pupils have a deeper understanding of new vocabulary. This approach has been highly effective. Pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of increasingly challenging words and use these to aid their reading comprehension. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils confidently discussed the meaning of the word 'dilapidated' and could use this to create a vivid picture to understand the setting.
- The teaching of whole-class reading is consistent across the school. Pupils demonstrate an insightful understanding of different reading skills, such as 'inference and summarising.' They read a range of challenging texts to complete

tasks with increased complexity. Pupils in all classes demonstrated strong understanding of unfamiliar words and could articulate their learning confidently.

- Leaders have introduced a 'Big read' session at the end of each week, when all staff and pupils read books at a set time. This makes a positive difference to pupils' attitudes towards and love for reading. Pupils told me that they enjoy these sessions immensely. One pupil shared, 'I can close my eyes and relax while enjoying a story read by my teacher.' Other pupils told me that this helps them to become aware of books by different authors, which pupils later independently chose by themselves.
- Some pupils enter the school with phonics skills below those expected for their age. Leaders identify these pupils and provide phonics and reading interventions to accelerate their progress. However, leaders do not check pupils' phonics and early reading skills as well as they could. As a result, teachers do not use accurate assessment information when teaching the lower-ability readers. Work set for lower-ability pupils in reading typically does not match their abilities and can be too difficult. Consequently, pupils struggle to read with fluency, and this hinders their reading comprehension. Sometimes, pupils are not challenged sufficiently because they learn letters and sounds that they can read with ease.
- The second focus for the inspection was leaders' actions to ensure that disadvantaged pupils' progress is similar to that of their peers. At the end of 2017, in key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment were not as high as those of other pupils, particularly at the higher standards.
- Leaders check disadvantaged pupils' progress rigorously. They have a robust understanding of individual pupils' needs. Teachers know disadvantaged pupils well and provide effective support. For example, adults worked well with pupils in a mathematics lesson to clarify any misconceptions. This helps these pupils to engage well with their work. Teachers consistently encourage disadvantaged pupils to discuss their work, and this helps pupils to develop good speaking and listening skills.
- In writing, disadvantaged pupils progress well. They write fluently and use an increased variety of vocabulary in their writing. However, disadvantaged pupils do not receive similar challenge to write in subjects other than English. This limits the progress of which they are capable.
- In mathematics, disadvantaged pupils have strong calculation skills. They use a range of strategies to show their workings. Teachers encourage pupils to collaborate with their peers and to think more deeply about their tasks. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make sustained progress in their mathematics. Occasionally, the most able disadvantaged pupils do not move on to more challenging tasks when they are ready.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils continue to rise, particularly at the higher standards, by providing pupils with more challenging tasks

- pupils' progress and attainment in reading continue to rise by:
 - providing lower-ability pupils with texts matched to their abilities, and opportunities to develop their fluency in reading
 - providing lower-ability pupils with appropriate work using accurate phonics assessment information.

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

Yours sincerely

Noeman Anwar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the start of the inspection, we agreed two lines of enquiry to evaluate the school's priorities. During the day, I visited classrooms and scrutinised pupils' books, accompanied by senior leaders. I carried out a review of the school's documentation, including the school's improvement plans, assessment and safeguarding information. I held meetings with senior and middle leaders, pupils from the English team, governors, a representative from the Diocese of London and a local authority adviser. Finally, I considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys, including 20 responses from parents and carers and five responses from staff members.