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Dear Miss Blake

Short inspection of Bickley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You joined the school in January 2017 and have breathed new life in to the school. You and your team immediately identified the main weaknesses in the school and put long-term plans in motion to improve key aspects, such as the provision for disadvantaged pupils, the development of middle leaders and communication with the local community. Parents and carers, staff and pupils speak very positively of the changes you have brought to the school and are confident that the school will continue to improve.

The school has been working with the Nexus Education Schools Trust since January 2018. Final completion of the academisation process is due shortly. Staff are proud to work at Bickley Primary and parents value the happy and nurturing feel of the school. Pupils are also extremely positive about the school. They enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the high attendance rates. Pupils live by the school motto 'all different, all equal, all achieve' and are very respectful towards adults and each other.

Middle leaders, who are relatively new in post, have benefited in particular from the many opportunities to develop their leadership skills, for example from structured training programmes. They feel more confident in their roles as a result. Governors have a good understanding of the school's priorities and work closely with school leaders. They are committed to the school and keen to enhance their skills.

Pupils continue to achieve highly at this school. Their attainment in early years, key

stage 1 and key stage 2 is consistently above the national average. Since your appointment, you and your leaders recognised the need to direct efforts to improving overall pupils' progress. You and your team prioritised the focus on challenging pupils, particularly the most able, to make greater progress. This was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Your actions are starting to have an impact, notably in mathematics where pupils' progress is significantly above the national average. Leaders now need to ensure that more middle-ability pupils are also challenged to achieve higher standards, particularly in writing, so that they make stronger progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders are diligent in ensuring that all appropriate checks are carried out on the suitability of staff. All staff and governors have received up-to-date training and are clear about procedures for reporting any concerns. Leaders follow up any concerns promptly, ensuring that pupils are kept safe and that families get support as necessary. The whole-school focus on mental health and well-being is providing valuable support to pupils and their families.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that staff teach them how to keep themselves safe, including online. They know who to go to if they have any worries and trust their teachers to help them if there any incidents of bullying or poor behaviour. Parents overwhelmingly agreed that their children are safe and well looked after at school.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to look at the effectiveness of leaders' actions to sustain improved outcomes in writing. In 2017, overall progress in writing at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average. In 2018, progress and attainment in writing improved significantly.
- Leaders identified, from working with other schools and comparing pupils' writing, that teachers' assessment of writing had been too harsh. As a result, leaders have increased the amount of moderation, both internal and external, and delivered staff training to ensure that pupils' work was assessed accurately. Teachers share good practice with other schools which gives them clear strategies for improving writing. For example, they review reading texts to ensure that they are suitably interesting and can be used to broaden writing across the school. Leaders have set up a mentor scheme to encourage boys' positive attitudes towards writing, recognising that some boys at times lack confidence as writers.
- Work in pupils' books shows evidence of high-quality writing across a range of genres. Teachers model writing effectively, so that pupils know how to improve their work, for example by using 'powerful' verbs and complex sentences. Pupils are generally enthusiastic about the purposeful nature of writing tasks.
- We next agreed to consider how leaders ensure that the most able pupils are

consistently challenged in lessons. This has been an ongoing focus for the school since the previous inspection. You have identified that attainment at the higher standard by key stage 2 should be better, given the high starting points of pupils.

- Leaders analyse information about pupils' progress and attainment rigorously. Staff attend regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress in detail. This ensures that staff know individual pupils' prior attainment and potential. Teachers use this information increasingly effectively to plan challenging tasks that will help pupils reach higher standards. In mathematics, for example, teachers routinely tailor work to meet pupils' needs. Teachers plan competitive activities which motivate pupils to try hard. As a result, pupils show a thirst for learning.
- Leaders' raised expectations of what pupils can achieve are beginning to have impact. So far, this has been most successful for high-ability pupils. Leaders now need to ensure that middle-ability pupils are equally challenged in lessons, particularly in writing, so that they too can make strong progress.
- Finally, we looked at the wider curriculum (subjects other than mathematics and English) to assess the impact this was having on pupils' learning. Leaders are keen to review the curriculum as part of the school development plan. They want to ensure that pupils get the best possible education from their time at school.
- Leaders are working to ensure that the curriculum is suitably broad and balanced and the impact of this is already clear. Pupils in each year group learn a wide variety of subjects and are generally enthused by their lessons. Sport and physical education continues to be a real strength of the school. Pupils participate in and are successful in inter-schools competitions, for example the Primary Panathlon. Leaders ensure that all pupils have access to the vast array of extra-curricular clubs, such as judo, lacrosse and table tennis. Leaders promote music well across the school. As a result, pupils enjoy learning different musical instruments and have regular opportunities to perform.
- In other subjects, pupils' learning is often linked through different topics. For example, Year 6 pupils proudly showed off the Egyptian death masks they had created, inspired by their history lessons. However, pupils' learning in some subjects is often quite superficial and lacks a depth of knowledge. More needs to be done to ensure that leaders' planning has the full impact they are aiming for.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more middle-ability pupils are challenged to reach higher standards in their work, particularly in writing
- pupils develop a deeper knowledge and understanding in subjects other than English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Jude Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited classes from all year groups, accompanied by senior leaders. I reviewed work in pupils' books from a wide range of subjects and year groups. I held meetings with senior and middle leaders, governors, and teachers and had a telephone discussion with a representative from the Nexus Education Schools Trust. I talked to pupils in the playground and met with a group of pupils to hear their views on the school. I scrutinised documentation provided by the school, including safeguarding information, bullying and behaviour logs, and the school's development plan. I considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys, including 102 responses from parents and 41 responses from staff.