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Ms Jessica Bailey
Headteacher
Betty Layward Primary School
Clissold Road
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Dear Ms Bailey

Short inspection of Betty Layward Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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 July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. After a period of turbulence, with several changes of headteacher, you were appointed and quickly established a clear sense of purpose. You have worked hard to develop the senior and middle leaders, and this has strengthened the leadership of the school. You and your team have a secure knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Strategies for improvement have been effective and, as a result, the school is improving. However, you are not complacent and agree that there is more work to be done. For example, you rightly identify the need to deepen learning in more subjects across the curriculum.

The school is a caring environment where pupils' well-being is a priority and everyone is valued. As a result, pupils are courteous and polite and behave very well. They welcome visitors warmly and are keen to talk about the school. Pupils are proud of their school. They are caring and are quick to support each other if there is a difficulty. As one pupil put it, 'I love this school because we are all one big happy family.' The overwhelming majority of parents agree, with one parent saying, 'The school is an incredibly positive, warm and fun educational environment.'

Pupils work hard in lessons and are keen to learn. They have a good understanding of the expectations of their teachers and respond enthusiastically. They enjoy their learning, and work well together. Their strong personal development contributes well to the progress they make across the curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of vigilance within the school. You, together with your staff and governors, give a high priority to keeping children safe. You have created a nurturing and inclusive environment where pupils feel cared for and protected.

The leadership has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Regular training for all staff ensures that they know what to do if they have a concern about a child. They know how to keep children safe. Clear processes are in place so that staff know how to report concerns promptly. These systems are supported well, with regular briefings that keep staff up to date with safeguarding issues. Swift action is taken, and timely referrals are made to the relevant outside agency should any serious concerns arise. As a result, staff safeguard pupils' welfare effectively.

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

The school monitors attendance effectively and rigorously follows up pupils who do not attend regularly. As a result, attendance is above the national average.

Pupils understand different forms of bullying, including online bullying. They say that though it is rare, if bullying does happen, they know they can talk to an adult and they will help them. Pupils know how to make sensible choices, which helps them to stay safe outside of school. The pupils I spoke to say they feel safe in school, and all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire agree.

Inspection findings

- The first key line of enquiry that we agreed to explore focused on how successfully leaders are improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in reading so that it is as good as other pupils nationally. This was because attainment at the expected standard and at greater depth was less than other pupils nationally.
- You and your leadership team have introduced several strategies to secure improvements in reading outcomes for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. These strategies include focused sessions to teach specific skills, such as how to infer and deduce meaning from a text. This has enabled pupils to gain a deeper understanding of what they are reading. Additional adults are used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils, checking carefully that the pupils understand what they are doing, and that they are benefiting from gaining new learning. As a result, and as assessment information suggests, disadvantaged pupils are making more progress than before.
- Pupils I heard read are developing a love for books, with some pupils sharing their favourite authors and saying why. For example, one pupil said, 'I love reading books by J K Rowling because the words she uses to describe things make me feel like I am in another world.'
- Pupils read with fluency and expression and most are able to work out the meaning of words they do not know by carefully studying the context. However, some disadvantaged pupils find some new words more difficult to read and understand than

their peers do. This is limiting their progress. Leaders agree that although progress is stronger than before, more work is needed to develop the vocabulary of disadvantaged pupils.

- The second area we agreed to explore was how successfully leaders are supporting teachers to improve the achievement of girls in writing so that more girls achieve age-related expectations at the end of key stage 2. This was because in 2017, fewer girls achieved age-related expectations than boys.
- Work in pupils' books shows that you have been successful in developing neatness and fluency in pupils' handwriting. As a result, pupils routinely present their work well. Teachers challenge pupils to be ambitious in their use of vocabulary and to spell difficult words correctly. Over time, pupils, including girls, use a wide range of vocabulary and use punctuation accurately.
- Pupils build up writing skills quickly and have regular opportunities to write at length. This enables pupils to improve the fluency of their writing and to demonstrate their use of language for its effect on the reader. As a result, girls are making stronger progress than last year. Assessment information suggests that more girls will achieve age-related expectations this year.
- The third area we agreed to investigate was how successfully leaders have supported teachers in using the curriculum to support deep learning in all subjects. We agreed to investigate this because information on the website suggests that the curriculum is a strength of the school.
- The curriculum supports the vision of the school well through providing ambitious and challenging activities. For example, homework projects are used to good effect by pupils who choose how to present their detailed work. Pupils say they find the topics they cover, and the broad range of subjects, interesting. Opportunities to write across the curriculum are used well. For example, some pupils used language effectively in a poem describing an air raid in the Second World War.
- Pupils benefit from specialist teachers in some subjects. Teachers use strong subject knowledge to achieve high-quality outcomes, and pupils' knowledge is developed well. However, in other subjects outcomes are variable. Leaders agree that more work is needed to deepen learning further in these subjects by giving pupils more opportunities to use and apply the knowledge that they have learned.
- Leaders have worked hard to develop a broad range of after-school activities, offering additional opportunities such as fencing, cooking and football. Pupils enjoy these activities, and parents value the breadth of the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- differences in reading outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally are diminished by further developing the vocabulary of disadvantaged pupils
- pupils are given regular opportunities to deepen learning across all subjects by using and applying the knowledge that they have learned.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hackney. 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 assistant headteachers, the lead for pupil premium, the vice-chair of the governing body, a governor and a representative from the local authority. I visited classes with you, reviewed work in pupils' books, listened to pupils read, and interrogated assessment information. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school and at playtime and talked with pupils informally in the playground. I talked with a range of staff, and evaluated documentation, including the schools self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, the single central record, and other safeguarding procedures and practices. I considered 149 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.