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Mr Nick Christou
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Dear Mr Christou

Short inspection of East Barnet School

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2017 with Joanne Hamill, 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 April 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, your leadership team and governors have continued to improve the school in accordance with your vision to inspire pupils to want to learn. The school motto, 'I want to learn' is powerful and effective, and pupils were keen to talk to the inspectors about what it means to them. Your focus on learning and subject knowledge has enabled you to build leadership and teaching capacity through a loyal team of like-minded, long-serving staff.

As leaders, you rightly have regard to national changes in education, examinations and performance tables but you are not driven by them. You review proposed changes thoughtfully with your leadership team to get the best possible outcomes for pupils. You and your staff have developed a consistent focus on high-quality subject learning, culminating in strong outcomes and destinations for sixth-form leavers in 2016. Three quarters of your Year 11 pupils join the sixth form and it is a recognised strength of the school.

Pupils enjoy learning and feel well supported by the school. They like teachers' enthusiasm and the way teachers always help them if they are stuck. Pupils say that they feel listened to and changes are made, for example to the arrangements for lunchtime, if they request it. Older pupils are particularly complimentary about careers information, advice and guidance. There are a wide range of talks on offer which help them think about their future.

Since the last inspection, teachers make better use of information about pupils' attainment and progress to plan their teaching. You have strengthened school systems for monitoring pupils' progress. You are reviewing the curriculum to ensure that pupils study an appropriate number of courses that are relevant and interesting, and prepare them for the next stage of their education. You are adamant that pupils study courses that meet their needs. Following the 2016 GCSE results, you and your governors moved swiftly to commission a review of the pupil premium spending. You are also making better use of the expertise within your sixth form, where disadvantaged students outperform other students.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Safeguarding leaders work well together. They are an effective team and make sure that all staff are trained appropriately. Leaders adapt how they deliver training so that all staff, including those with flexible working patterns, are trained to the same standard and feel confident about their safeguarding responsibilities.

Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding across the school, because they take care to monitor the impact of their work. They carry out spot checks, in face-to-face sessions and in surveys, to check that all staff understand their responsibilities. Leaders act on the outcomes of their evaluation. For example, one check revealed that staff did not fully understand the school's emergency incident response plan and so a 'lockdown' drill took place so that everyone was clear about the procedure.

School leaders are very knowledgeable about the risks facing young people, so they tailor their staff training and support for pupils to raise awareness and minimise these risks. For example, staff training has focused on preventing child sexual exploitation. Visiting reputable organisations have led workshops for pupils to give them information and strategies for dealing with risks online. Pupils feel safe and parents also agree that their children are safe in school. Pupils value and appreciate the school's work in this area. They are confident that the site is safe and know that there are always staff on duty if they need help.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils, particularly low and high attainers, made less progress in mathematics than other pupils in school and nationally. Observations of learning, discussions with pupils and work in pupils' books indicate that disadvantaged pupils are now making stronger progress in mathematics. Least-able pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, benefit from effective teaching and support in mathematics. Teachers and teaching assistants set high expectations. For example, they insist that pupils draw shapes and graphs using the correct equipment. They challenge pupils with carefully timed questions. As a result, pupils are motivated and focused on completing their work. As one pupil exclaimed, 'This is the best maths set in the whole school!'
- The most able disadvantaged pupils make good progress in mathematics. Teachers are preparing pupils effectively, in all year groups, for the more challenging GCSE courses. In Year 7, the most able pupils know the equation of a straight line and can rearrange complex formulae. Pupils are motivated by difficult work. This builds their confidence and they are proud of their knowledge and mathematical skills.
- Pupils' attendance overall is currently higher than the national average, as it was in 2016. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities dipped in 2016. School leaders reported that the school had been hit by two bouts of illness in 2016 and again in 2017, which had had a disproportionate effect on these groups of pupils. The attendance officer and year leaders work tirelessly to follow up absence with pupils and their families. Procedures are robust and rigorous, but attendance for these groups of pupils has been stubbornly resistant to improvement.
- The school's work to reduce persistent absence has had a more positive impact. Overall, the persistent absence figure is lower than the national average but the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils rose in 2016, compared with the previous years. In the current year, the persistent absence of these groups of pupils has fallen in four out of five year groups. School leaders acknowledge that this remains too high but it is improving.
- Pupils made less progress than they should in science and humanities subjects in 2016. Work in pupils' books indicates that they are now making better progress in these subjects. In science, pupils' written work shows a strong understanding of scientific terms and concepts. Pupils' practical work is detailed and thorough and they can apply their numeracy skills successfully to analysing and interpreting experimental results. The most able pupils make links in their thinking between different science topics to explore answers to problems. In humanities, school leaders and subject staff have responded positively to some disappointing outcomes, particularly in geography, in 2016. Teachers now make the links between the subject content and the assessment criteria in the examination questions much clearer for pupils. Pupils apply their numeracy skills effectively in geography and present their work well.

- Overall, teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. Teachers' good subject knowledge and their exposition of new concepts and information promote pupils' progress well. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers plan challenging activities for pupils and use resources which are well designed and chosen to meet pupils' needs. However, teachers' questioning is not always effective in deepening pupils' learning and teachers do not always check systematically that all pupils have understood the work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attend school on a regular basis in line with other pupils
- teachers develop their questioning skills further to check systematically that all pupils have understood the work and to deepen pupils' learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Hallett

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with the headteacher and the senior leadership team at the start of the school day to review the school's self-evaluation and plan inspection activities. Other meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, including subject leaders and staff responsible for safeguarding, attendance and behaviour. A telephone discussion was held with the chair of the governing body. Inspectors visited classes in a range of subjects in all year groups from Year 7 to Year 11 to observe pupils' learning and look at their books. Inspectors spoke with pupils in classes and around the school, met with two groups of pupils about their views of the school and scrutinised their work. Inspectors evaluated a range of documentation, including minutes of governors' meetings and safeguarding information.