

# Seven Mills Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 100931         |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Tower Hamlets  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 395399         |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 17–18 May 2012 |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | John Worgan    |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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|--|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary                              |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                            |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3–11                                 |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 230                                  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Sonia Crew                           |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Mike Hirst                           |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 7–8 July 2008                        |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Malabar Street<br>London<br>E14 8LY  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 020 7987 2350                        |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 020 7538 3118                        |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | admin@sevenmills.towerhamlets.sch.uk |

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|---------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 3–11           |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 17–18 May 2012 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>  | 395399         |



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## Introduction

Inspection team

John Worgan

Additional inspector

Maria Coles

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 12 lessons or parts of lessons, taught by eight teachers. They also observed a range of intervention and phonics (learning about letter sounds) sessions, listened to pupils reading and looked at their work. Discussions were held with groups of pupils, staff, and parents and carers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation documents and action plan, pupils' progress records and safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires returned by 99 parents and carers were received and were analysed, along with those from pupils and staff.

## Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school which serves its local community. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also well above average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The largest group of pupils is of Bangladeshi heritage. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum standards expected by the government. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Nursery class and a Reception class. A daily breakfast club is provided, which is managed by the school. The headteacher was appointed in September 2011, following a period when the school was without a permanent headteacher.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>          | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Achievement of pupils</b>          | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Quality of teaching</b>            | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>      | <b>3</b> |

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because, while pupils are making satisfactory and improving progress, achievement and teaching throughout the school are not yet consistently good. Parents and carers, pupils and staff spoke highly of the improvement since the arrival of the new headteacher, and evidence gathered during the inspection supports this view. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They make expected progress from low starting points. Children's personal development is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which provides a good platform for future learning. The school's tracking data indicate that pupils' progress in Year 6 is considerably better than in previous years, which was supported by inspectors' examination of their work.
- Teaching is satisfactory. There is effective teaching in the school but it is not consistent enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress. The school has implemented several strategies to improve teaching, with some success. The quality of marking and assessment is inconsistent.
- Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Attendance is average and has improved in the last year. Pupils have good attitudes to learning, behave well and generally show respect for each other and for adults in the school, although some parents and carers, and a few pupils reported instances of poor behaviour.
- The school provides a secure, safe and inclusive learning environment, and effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum meets statutory requirements but lacks cohesion between subjects and does not always challenge higher-attaining pupils. Leaders and managers are clear about what needs to improve and teachers' performance is

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monitored thoroughly. Professional development focuses on the improvement in teaching. The strategic use of pupils' progress data is at an early stage of development. Middle management roles are not sufficiently focused and accountability is not always clear.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good in order to accelerate pupils' progress by:
  - ensuring that marking, assessment and tracking procedures are used more consistently to support pupils' progress
  - sharing good practice within the school and developing links with other schools.
- Strengthen middle management by ensuring that roles and responsibilities in relation to raising achievement are clearly defined and that managers have clear targets, progress towards which is monitored and evaluated.
- Improve school policies, systems and practice to enhance pupils' achievement by:
  - developing the curriculum to ensure that it inspires all pupils and meets their needs, especially those of the more able
  - ensuring that systems are in place to monitor pupils' performance, at a strategic level.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children start at the school in the nursery with knowledge and skills that are much lower than expected for their age. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, they make good progress in most areas of experience, especially in personal development, where good teaching and appropriate modelling of social skills have a clear impact. Progress in communication, language and literacy, however, is slower, and attainment is still below average by the time pupils start in Year 1. In the national tests in 2011 for Year 6, attainment in English and mathematics was below national averages. The school's data for the current Year 6, together with inspection evidence, indicate that there has been significant improvement in both English and mathematics.

The school's self-evaluation indicates that there have been significant areas of underachievement. These included poor performance in writing by boys at Key Stage 1 and by girls in both English and mathematics at Key Stage 2. These issues have been addressed with some success and the gaps have narrowed considerably. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers because of well-targeted support which encourages independent learning.

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Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make slower progress than their peers. The school is aware of this and is taking action to support these pupils through an intervention programme. Provision for language development has been strengthened through the appointment of a specialist teacher for Spoken Language and Communication. Inspectors found that pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read enthusiastically and said that they enjoyed reading. Pupils in Year 2 were developing their reading skills and were able to use letter sounds to decode some unfamiliar words. There are examples of good phonics teaching, which is adapted to the needs of pupils at different stages in their reading. Year 6 pupils generally read fluently but girls were more confident than boys and read with greater expression. In both Key Stages, reading matches national standards.

### **Quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is satisfactory but improving. Parents and carers, and pupils, are positive about teaching. Pupils say that they learn a lot in lessons and teachers help them do as well as they can. Inspectors found that teachers' expectations are not always consistently high enough. In the more successful lessons, pupils are actively involved and work together successfully in pairs and groups. Consequently, they make good progress. In these lessons, teachers' good questioning skills promote learning well. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils recalled prior learning to help them attempt a currency conversion task, linked to their imminent visit to France. In this and similar lessons, teaching has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is because pupils are fully engaged and motivated; they work together well and take responsibility for their learning. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, for example, pupils responded enthusiastically to an activity, choosing items from a box, which stimulated ideas for a story, prompting them to use adjectives imaginatively. They demonstrated good speaking and listening skills.

Staff have been trained in the teaching of reading, which is well taught. Pupils read confidently in class and to inspectors. Pupils spoke highly of their teachers and said that they were helped and supported in making progress. Few were aware of their National Curriculum levels, however, and target-setting is inconsistent because target completion is not always monitored and rewarded. In lessons where teaching is less effective, pupils spend too long listening to teachers, limiting the time for independent and group work. There is sometimes a lack of pace in these lessons and pupils often all start at the same point, and so higher-attaining pupils do not always have the time to extend their learning. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported, both within classes and through a range of successful support activities.

Pupils' work is generally marked regularly and thoroughly with careful correction of written work. The best examples of marking give pupils clear guidance on the next steps in their learning but this was rarely followed up. Examples of the use of numeracy and literacy across the curriculum were seen; for example, pupils in Year 4 had produced extended writing of good quality, which had been marked and

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corrected carefully.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is thoughtful planning for all areas of learning, indoors and outdoors. There is a good balance between activities that are directed by adults and those in which children make their own choices. There are good relationships between children and adults, who encourage children's growing independence.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Pupils, staff and the majority of parents and carers are positive about the school and its work. There are good relationships between pupils and adults that promote good attitudes to learning. Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires agree that the school keeps their children safe. A small minority of parents and carers, and a few pupils, reported that behaviour in lessons is not always good. Pupils, in their questionnaires and in discussion, said they feel safe in school and are confident that teachers deal with any incidents of inappropriate behaviour or bullying promptly and well. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They said that there were clear rules which were applied fairly. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concern about lunchtime supervision and relationships between kitchen staff and pupils. These issues have been investigated by the school and the local authority, and appropriate action has been taken. Inspectors observed lunchtime behaviour and found no cause for concern.

The work of the learning mentor and the home-school support worker has a positive impact in supporting pupils who have considerable behavioural needs. Pupils respond well to sanctions and rewards, and they respect the rights and feelings of others. Staff manage behaviour well so that pupils are orderly and conduct themselves well in lessons, in which learning is rarely disrupted, and in the playground, where there is a high level of supervision. The school's own behaviour records and discussions with pupils show that this is typical.

Attendance is average and improving. The home-school liaison worker's efforts have made a significant difference to the attendance of some of the school's more persistent absentees.

### **Leadership and management**

The strong leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has clearly been a factor in improvements which have had a significant impact during the last year. Prior to that, there had been a significant dip in the school's performance following the previous inspection. As one parent said: 'The head's commitment has made noticeable changes at Seven Mills. As a parent, I feel encouraged and optimistic.'

These improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement over the past

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year demonstrate the school's growing capacity to improve further. There is an ethos of improvement which is shared by all. As one member of staff said, 'The head's vision for the school is crystal clear – we focus on learning'. The school has been through a difficult period in terms of governance and leadership, and, although senior leadership is now settled and secure, middle-management roles and responsibilities are being reviewed and changes have yet to make a full impact. School self-evaluation is accurate and honest, and informs improvement planning well. Good examples of this are the successful action taken to improve reading and development of spoken language and communication, including professional development training for all staff. All leaders, including the governing body, know the school's strengths and weaknesses, and share a clear strategy for further improvement. Governors share the headteacher's vision and support the school with challenge and enthusiasm, although some are new to the role.

Regular communication, breakfast provision and meetings with parents and carers are among the successful strategies to engage parents and carers in the life of the school and to support their children's learning.

The school is committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination. Pupils have a sense of belonging, fostered by the inclusive ethos that promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. There is good pastoral support, particularly for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Data are used well to support individual pupils but are not yet analysed fully at a strategic level so that the performance of groups of pupils and changes over time can be monitored. The school works very effectively with a wide range of external organisations and agencies to help pupils and families stay involved in their education. All safeguarding requirements are well established and ensure that pupils feel safe and learn in a safe environment.

The curriculum is broad and balanced but links between subjects and topics are tenuous and in some areas it does not include aspects which would stretch more-able pupils. The good practice in teaching is not always shared across year groups. Art, music, and information and communication technology enrich pupils' experiences, as does the wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities. These include Indian dance and a newspaper produced by pupils. Pupils in all years benefit from visits, including a trip to France for Year 6 and a residential week combining historical and outdoor pursuits for Year 5. There are a number of effective links with local businesses and a secondary school.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

| Grade   | Judgement    | Description  |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.  |
| Grade 2 | Good         | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.  |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.  |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

### Overall effectiveness of schools

| Type of school       | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) |      |              |            |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
|                      | Outstanding   | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools      | 54  | 42   | 2            | 2          |
| Primary schools      | 14  | 49   | 32           | 6          |
| Secondary schools    | 20  | 39   | 34           | 7          |
| Special schools      | 33  | 45   | 20           | 3          |
| Pupil referral units | 9   | 55   | 28           | 8          |
| All schools          | 16  | 47   | 31           | 6          |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement:               | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.   |
| Attainment:                | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.  |
| Attendance                 | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.   |
| Behaviour                  | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.   |
| Capacity to improve:       | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.                    |
| Floor standards            | the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.  |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.                            |
| Learning:                  | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.  |
| Overall effectiveness:     | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.  |
| Progress:                  | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |
| Safety                     | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.             |

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**

19 May 2012

Dear Pupils



### **Inspection of Seven Mills Primary School, London, E14 8LY**

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You are polite and friendly, and we appreciated the way you helped us find out about your school through questionnaires and discussions. Seven Mills is a satisfactory school, which means that some things are good and some things need to be better.

These are some of the things that stood out about your school.

- You and your teachers have worked hard to improve your progress and results are improving.
- Your school is a safe place, and staff care for you well and help you when you have problems or difficulties.
- You obviously enjoy coming to school because you have improved your attendance. Well done for this, and keep it up!

We have asked your school to do the following things to improve.

- Make teaching even better by:
  - ensuring teachers share good ideas with each other and with other schools to plan lessons which are interesting, challenging and enjoyable
  - using marking and assessment to set you challenging targets, so that you know what to do to improve your work.
- Change teachers' responsibilities for subjects and other areas of the school to help you make even better progress.
- Review school policies to ensure that:
  - the curriculum is planned so that lessons are inspiring for all of you
  - information about your progress is used so that different groups can be helped and supported.

All of you can help the school improve by always working hard and doing your best.

Yours sincerely

John Worgan  
Lead inspector

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