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Ms Julie D'Abreu
Headteacher
The Devonshire Hill Nursery & Primary School
Weir Hall Road
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Dear Ms D'Abreu

Short inspection of The Devonshire Hill Nursery & Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 October 2016, 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

As a result of your strong leadership and ambitious vision for pupils, the school is in a much better position than it was at the last inspection. Senior leaders, including the governors, and staff and pupils were not daunted because you were absent. All demonstrated loyalty and their understanding of the school's ethos and vision of high expectations. Staff are very clear about their role in realising the school's vision for all pupils to achieve their 'best'. This is of prime importance if pupils are unable to access resources and support to increase their learning after school.

You have used the very good partnership work with Tollgate Teaching Alliance to increase the capacity of staff, in particular senior and middle leaders. All have spread the benefits of their training and development. As a result, the school is well placed to develop further.

My discussions with parents and staff indicate that they recognise how much the physical environment and the academic achievement of pupils have improved under your leadership. For example, outcomes in the early years and in the phonics screening check have consistently been well above average for several years. You have gained the confidence of the vast majority of parents.

Parents appreciate the school's work and say that their children are settled, happy and safe at the school. Pupils spoken to also share this view. Parents are keen for their children to achieve well and have asked for the school to set up more homework clubs and trips to support them to help their children.

Your school provides pupils with a stimulating environment that drives them to learn. My scrutiny of pupils' books and observations of pupils at the breakfast club, in lessons and at social times confirm that they live up to the challenge of high expectations of work and behaviour.

At the start of the inspection, I explained the key lines of enquiry to the interim headteacher and national leader of education. Both agreed that they reflect the key areas for development in the school's evaluation of its work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The single central record is well maintained. Checks on the suitability of staff, and all other adults who work in the school part time or as volunteers, are diligently carried out. Records of child protection and safeguarding matters are detailed, carefully maintained and stored securely.

Staff are given good-quality training, both internally and by external providers. Scrutiny of training materials shows that your staff are kept up to date with the latest guidance. This has helped to increase their understanding of national priorities on, for example, radicalisation, extremism and female genital mutilation. They are also very much aware of potential local concerns around gangs. Your staff are vigilant and use the pastoral system very well to make sure that children and families can access the help and support needed.

Inspection findings

- The first key line of enquiry focused on the low attendance of a few pupils. As at the last inspection, the school has maintained a sharp focus on tackling low attendance. You have not hesitated in taking stringent actions to improve poor attendance, and where necessary, further legal proceedings follow if improvement is not evident. This no-nonsense approach is proving successful and attendance is now slightly better than the national average.
- The use of a range of 'softer' options such as home visits and a reward system contribute to pupils attending regularly. Nevertheless, you know that there is more to do to encourage the handful of parents who do not always cooperate with the call for their children to attend school regularly.
- The second line of enquiry reviewed the actions taken to improve outcomes for the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. Historical data between 2014 and 2015 shows that pupils made exceptionally good progress by the end of key stage 2. In both key stages, virtually all pupils made expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the percentage achieving the higher levels was not consistent, particularly for the most able disadvantaged pupils in reading and writing.

- The 2016 provisional results were disappointing in the percentage of the most able pupils achieving greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics. The difference between the achievement of the most able pupils and the national average has increased. You have quickly introduced a number of changes that have led to a heightened awareness of challenging the most able to develop their thinking. For example, subject coordinators are now more focused on the quality of planning and teaching targeting the most able pupils. You are also using staff appraisal to challenge subject coordinators to ensure that this group of pupils make better progress. More work is planned, and my discussions with senior and middle leaders, and observations of pupils in lessons, confirm that steps taken are appropriately linked to the needs of this group of pupils.
- The third line of enquiry was directed at pupils' achievement in reading and writing. While most pupils made expected progress in writing in the 2016 key stage 2 tests, only 52% did in reading. The actual outcomes in both were below the school's predictions. Pupils are prolific writers and the quality of their writing is a strength but there is more to do to make sure that their writing style and use of language enables them to reach greater depth.
- You have analysed reading papers and identified specific weaknesses. For example, leaders recognise that pupils' skills of inference, deduction and reference to different aspects of language require further development. There is recognition that pupils have not mastered good exam techniques. You have begun to address these weaknesses.
- There is now more emphasis on developing pupils' love for reading and understanding different layers of texts. Plans are being rolled out to work with parents who are learning to speak English, to support and read more with their children.
- Although there is emerging good evidence that pupils are taught how to analyse texts, there is an imbalance in the amount of time given to writing, mathematics and reading. My scrutiny of pupils' books confirmed that not all teachers are effective in developing pupils' skills to interpret texts accurately and focus on a writer's use of language.
- The fourth key line of enquiry looked at the strategic direction of senior leaders, including the governing body, to move the school forward. The chair of governors has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors with specific responsibilities use reviews, hold meetings with staff, and use their links with subject coordinators to check on the school's effectiveness. Leaders and governors are outward looking and have well-considered plans for the school's future development. Governors provide challenge and together with senior leaders, they work closely with other partners, including the Tollgate Teaching Alliance and the school improvement partner.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- make sure that the most able pupils, in particular the most able disadvantaged pupils, are routinely given work that challenges them to achieve their best
- ensure that pupils develop good reading skills that enable them to:
 - command a wide vocabulary to access a wide range of texts
 - comment on a writer's use of language
 - identify different layers of meaning.

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

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, the interim headteacher had been in post for three days. I held several meetings with her and the national leader of education. Meetings were held with the school improvement partner, other senior and middle leaders, including the designated teacher responsible for safeguarding, and the attendance officer.

I scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, records of pupils' views on reading, attendance records and the survey responses conducted by the school with pupils and governors. I also took into consideration the feedback from parents and carers who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met a few parents and carers at the start of the school day when they dropped their children off. I also met a group of parents. I made short visits to a few lessons in the early years and in key stages 1 and 2. During my visits to lessons, I heard pupils reading aloud and responding to questions in Year 6 and Year 3.

All inspection activities focused on the school's work to improve the attendance of pupils who do not attend regularly. I also considered the actions the school is taking to ensure that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are achieving their best, and that all pupils are making better progress in reading and writing. In addition, I considered the strategic direction and capacity of senior leaders to ensure that the school can improve further.