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Miss Leanne Oppenheimer  
Acting Headteacher  
Queenswell Infant & Nursery School  
Sweets Way  
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London  
N20 0NQ

Dear Miss Oppenheimer

### **Short inspection of Queenswell Infant & Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 24 May 2017, 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 previous inspection. You and your acting deputy headteacher are working with great determination to ensure that every pupil makes the best possible progress. In your capacity as acting headteacher, you are ensuring that the momentum for improvement is not lost while the substantive headteacher is on maternity leave.

Leaders at all levels work in close partnership and share your high aspirations. Staff feel valued and respected. In the words of one staff member, 'The senior leadership team has an open-door policy where I am happy to air any concerns and share my ideas.' Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive and appreciate your work. You have created a vibrant and stimulating learning environment where pupils value their learning and make good progress. Pupils are confident, articulate and enthusiastic learners. Nevertheless, not all groups of pupils attend school as regularly as they should. You recognise that reducing absence rates needs to be a priority going forward.

You and your leaders have effectively addressed the areas for improvement since the previous inspection. You have raised the profile of mathematics and, in turn, this has led to improving outcomes, particularly for the most able pupils. Teachers have been well trained so that they deliver the mathematics curriculum effectively and tailor teaching to the needs of different abilities. Leaders' frequent monitoring of teaching and learning ensures that pupils are given opportunities to apply their

numeracy skills across the curriculum. This deepens their understanding of key mathematical concepts. A pupil said, 'I enjoy learning because my teacher gives me challenges in mathematics. I learn my times tables because it also helps me with division.'

Writing continues to be a strength of the school. This is apparent in the pupils' written work displayed around the school. Nevertheless, we agreed that there is work to do to raise the attainment in phonics for the most able pupils by providing opportunities for them to apply these phonics skills in reading and writing. Furthermore, you have rightly recognised the need for increased opportunities for children in the early years to develop their speaking and listening skills to support them to record their ideas accurately in writing.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. Governors regularly check the single central record to make sure that adults working with pupils are suitable and checked appropriately in line with latest legislation.

Leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of vigilance with regard to safeguarding pupils. On arrival, visitors are given detailed information about the school's safeguarding and fire drill procedures. Staff are well trained to notice any changes in pupils' behaviour and will not hesitate to raise concerns with leaders, should they need to. They have received training in all aspects of safeguarding, including radicalisation and extremism. Staff receive updates on safeguarding matters on a weekly basis and, as a result, they understand and follow the school's safeguarding procedures consistently.

Pupils said that they feel safe at school. They reported that they are taught about safety through lessons and assemblies. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils were keen to talk about the benefits of the recent poster design competition on e-safety, to raise awareness of how to stay safe online. Pupils said that bullying is a rare occurrence at the school. There are systems in place such as a 'worry box' and 'Queenswell post box' outside your office, where they can post their worries. Pupils told me that their concerns are taken seriously by adults. Parents and staff agree that behaviour is good and bullying is rare.

### **Inspection findings**

- We began by exploring the actions that leaders are taking to speed up pupils' progress in writing so that more pupils write at greater depth within the standard expected for their age. In 2016, the proportion of pupils with average prior attainment who achieved this standard in writing was below the national average.
- Leaders have taken effective action to ensure that this group of pupils is challenged sufficiently in their writing and that they make good progress.

Teachers plan exciting activities to motivate all pupils to write, both in their English lessons and in different subjects, like geography. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to role play before they write, for example, talking about how they would feel if they had won a golden ticket to visit a chocolate factory. This gives pupils the ideas and ambitious vocabulary that they need to produce high-quality writing. They use their basic skills well to write in a range of styles, for example by writing a 'Queenswell Infant School Newsletter'. Pupils' written work displayed around the school and in their books confirms that pupils are making good progress in their writing. An increased proportion of pupils are writing in greater depth at the expected standard.

- Another focus of the inspection was pupils' attainment in phonics at the end of Years 1 and 2. We explored the impact of leaders' actions to improve outcomes in phonics. In 2016, the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 1 in the phonics screening check was below the national average. There has been an uneven pattern of attainment over the last three years. Furthermore, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who met the expected standard by the end of Year 2 was below average, compared to other pupils nationally.
- Leaders have taken robust actions to improve pupils' achievement in phonics. The impact of their actions is evident in the regular assessments that are completed with pupils in Years 1 and 2. Assessment information shows that the majority of pupils in Year 1 and disadvantaged pupils in Year 2 are on track to achieve age-expected standards this year.
- Teachers have received effective training in the teaching of phonics. Consequently, they have the necessary subject knowledge to help pupils to develop their knowledge of the sounds that different letters make. During our visits to lessons, we observed the good gains that pupils are making in their phonics knowledge and skills. However, we also noted that the most able pupils in Year 1 are not challenged sufficiently well. This is because teachers do not consistently give pupils the opportunity to apply their phonics skills in reading and writing in lessons. As a result, this slows down the progress that these pupils make in phonics.
- Next, we focused on what leaders are doing to improve standards at the end of early years. In 2016, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development had declined from the previous year. Furthermore, boys did not perform as well as their peers nationally, with a lower proportion achieving a good level of development than was the case in other schools. Similarly, in 2016, the proportion of children eligible for free school meals who achieved a good level of development was below other children nationally.
- Leadership of the early years is effective. Leaders track children's progress robustly to make sure that all children, including boys and those eligible for free school meals, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They identify the children who are making slow progress and swiftly put in place additional support and interventions to ensure that no child is left behind in their learning and development. During our visit to Reception classes, I observed how well boys, and those eligible for free school meals, were using their phonics knowledge and skills to read and write words and sentences. However,

sometimes adults do not make the most of all opportunities to promote children's speaking and listening skills, particularly when children are preparing to write sentences.

- Finally, we focused on the actions that leaders have taken to improve attendance for all pupils, particularly boys and those eligible for free school meals. We also looked at the impact of leaders' actions to reduce persistent absence for pupils eligible for free school meals.
- Leaders have put in place a wide range of incentives and other strategies to improve attendance. While these are appreciated by the pupils and are beginning to have an impact, the attendance of pupils, particularly of these groups of pupils, is lower than the national average. Persistent absence is still high for pupils eligible for free school meals.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- phonics teaching routinely challenges the most able pupils and that they have frequent opportunities to apply their phonics knowledge and skills in reading and writing in lessons
- adults in the early years make the most of opportunities to promote children's speaking and listening skills, especially when children are writing
- the attendance of all pupils, particularly boys and those pupils eligible for free school meals, improves so that these pupils attend school as regularly as they should.

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

Rajeshree Mehta  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I went on three 'learning walks' with the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher. We jointly scrutinised pupils' written work. During my visit to lessons, I talked to pupils about their learning and listened to them read. In addition, I held a discussion with a group of Year 2 pupils. I held meetings with senior and middle leaders to discuss their work on the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement and safeguarding arrangements. I also met with a representative from the local authority. I met with two governors and reviewed minutes of the governing body meetings. I considered the 49 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent

View, and the four letters received from parents. The 22 responses from the staff online questionnaire were analysed. I scrutinised a range of documentation relating to school improvement, behaviour and safeguarding.