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Mr William Dean
Headteacher
Highgate Primary School
North Hill
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Dear Mr Dean

Short inspection of Highgate Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and your leaders have established a truly inclusive school where pupils' personal development is as important as their academic achievement. Parents, staff and pupils value your hard work and they fully support you and your leadership team. Leaders have a clear vision for the school's future and ensure that the school's ethos and values are woven into everything they do. Staff share this vision and know the role they play in bringing about further improvement. Governors understand and fulfil their responsibilities well, providing a good level of support and challenge.

Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to build on its strengths. You have maintained the close partnership with the on-site school for deaf children and briefly took on the role of executive headteacher last year. Attainment at key stages 1 and 2 is above national averages and children get off to a great start in the early years. The broad and balanced curriculum offers pupils a range of subjects and enriching experiences, such as learning Mandarin and British sign language. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm, creating an atmosphere of openness and trust. As one parent says, 'They treat every child as an individual.'

You have carefully analysed the school's current performance and have identified key areas for development. The quality of teaching and learning continues to be a

focus, particularly in developing mastery in key skills and ensuring that work meets the different needs of pupils. You and your leaders recognise that the school could do more to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points, particularly disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding requirements are fit for purpose. School leaders and governors are knowledgeable about the latest safeguarding requirements. All staff receive regular training and follow school procedures if they have any concerns. Members of the pastoral team know the pupils and their individual needs well. They understand the importance of their role and ensure that pupils and their families receive the necessary help. The school continues to run an extensive support programme from the nearby family centre which is a valued part of the community.

You and your leaders ensure that pupils' well-being is at the heart of everything the school does. As a result, the school is a safe and happy environment. Pupils and parents are unanimous in their positive comments about the safety and care provided by the school.

Inspection findings

- Attainment in all key stage 2 subjects is above national averages. However, progress scores have been variable. In 2017, the progress pupils made by the end of Year 6 was lower in writing and mathematics than in reading. In 2016, it was the other way round and progress in writing was higher than other subjects. We agreed to consider this as our first line of enquiry.
- You and your leaders made improvements in reading last year and have started to apply the same effort to ensuring that pupils make better progress in writing and mathematics. Teachers are more aware of pupils' prior attainment due to the introduction of a new, more rigorous, tracking system. This means that staff give more focus to pupils' progress from their different starting points, rather than attainment. Gaps in knowledge or skills are identified at an earlier stage, often in Years 3 and 4. Leaders are putting appropriate intervention in place so that less 'catch-up' is needed in Year 6.
- You acknowledge that it is too early to see the impact of some actions, which are specific to writing and mathematics. For example, key stage 2 pupils have started to do more reasoning tasks in mathematics lessons, and English lessons in key stage 2 have an increased focus on spelling and grammar. However, observations of learning, pupil performance information and work in pupils' books indicate that pupils in almost all year groups are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The second line of enquiry concerned the use of pupil premium funding. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment by the end of key stage 2 was below that of other pupils. Outcomes in 2016 showed that disadvantaged pupils' attainment levels in reading and mathematics were below the national averages.
- The leadership team has reviewed how the pupil premium funding is allocated.

They have considered carefully the barriers to learning for some pupils. Leaders recognise that some of the actions put in place previously had not been effective. School leaders have changed their approach, particularly to targeted interventions. They have begun to take a more active role in teaching small groups of pupils and providing additional support in English and mathematics.

- Leaders have rightly ensured that pupil premium funding is matched to the needs of disadvantaged pupils across the school. The funding helps to provide much needed pastoral support to pupils and their families, which is highly valued within the local community. Evaluation of funding shows that this support is having a positive impact on the lives of disadvantaged pupils. However, governors and school leaders need to focus also on the progress of disadvantaged pupils to inform future planning.
- We agreed, as the third line of enquiry, to look at the school's work to improve standards in phonics. In 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was just below average.
- School leaders analysed the 2016 outcomes in detail and put measures in place to help pupils make better progress in phonics. Teachers from Reception and Year 1 work together closely to ensure a smoother transition between key stages. The assessment system helps teachers have a consistent approach to checking pupils' progress. Practical issues, such as changing the time of daily phonics sessions, have proved successful. Pupils who are struggling are no longer withdrawn from whole-class phonics sessions to be taught separately but, instead, receive additional support later in the school day.
- In 2017, outcomes in the Year 1 phonics check improved slightly. The vast majority of pupils pass the check when they retake it in Year 2. Evidence to date indicates that leaders' actions to improve outcomes in phonics will be increasingly effective.
- The final line of enquiry we agreed to consider was attendance, with particular regard to vulnerable groups of pupils. Overall attendance has been below the national average in recent years, and significantly so for some groups of pupils.
- Leaders have improved the rate of attendance overall and for all groups of pupils, although it is still below average. School leaders analyse absence figures closely and identify causes for concern at an early stage. Leaders are persistent in offering support to the most vulnerable families and have in-depth knowledge of the reasons for absence. The leadership team know there is more work to do in improving the attendance of those who are frequently absent.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they analyse more sharply the use of pupil premium funding to make sure that it has a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils' progress
- they build on the improvements in attendance to make sure that no pupils are disadvantaged by high levels of absence from school.

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

Jude Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team to discuss aspects of the school's work. With senior leaders, I observed key stage 2 lessons in English and mathematics and a key stage 1 phonics lesson. I spoke to pupils and looked at examples of their work. I had a discussion with four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. I spoke to staff about safeguarding and evaluated the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe. I met with the school improvement adviser from the local authority. I scrutinised documentation provided by you, including the school's attendance records, current pupil performance information, the school's self-evaluation and development plan. I considered the 221 responses to Parent View, as well as the 30 staff responses and 221 pupil responses to Ofsted's questionnaires.