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6 October 2017

Mrs Jacqui Holder  
Headteacher  
Whitehall Primary School  
Normanton Park  
London, E4 6ES

Dear Mrs Holder

### **Short inspection of Whitehall Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 October 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the school's last inspection. You identified what the school needed to improve on and have worked hard to achieve this. Your senior and middle leaders are well equipped to continue this journey of improvement and are rightly encouraged by the initiatives they have already introduced that are having a positive impact.

Your governing body is committed to the school; they hold you to account and are highly supportive and well informed of the school's current priorities. Governors have an accurate picture of how well pupils are doing through spending time in lessons and meeting with senior leaders. Parents are supportive, which is reflected in the online Ofsted questionnaire and through informal conversations with parents in the morning, when children are being dropped off.

Parents typically say that their children settle quickly into new classes, are happy and are doing well. When their children need additional help or support, the school is quick to recognise this and put interventions in place. They say that staff, including senior leaders, are approachable.

You know your school well and the needs of your pupils and community. You have invested time and resources into developing the outside area and playground so that it is welcoming for parents and also a practical and spacious learning environment. The outdoor provision for your youngest children is inviting and engaging and is

beginning to focus on print and number in the environment, as well as promoting physical development.

Your pupils are a credit to you. They are keen to share new initiatives on how they help make Whitehall even better. They spoke confidently about a range of issues and feel they really make a difference in helping their peers eat more healthily and participate in sports and morning routines such as 'wake up and shake up', for example. Deaf children are well supported during lessons and engage well during playtime activities.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding and keeping children safe is important at this school. A safeguarding culture extends to all staff, including the chair of the governing body. This is evident from the thorough record keeping and processes in place, to conversations with children about keeping safe online and how they have used this in real life experiences. Staff have received updated training and can show the impact this has had, such as a heightened awareness of risks such as extremism and female genital mutilation. Staff know how to report concerns; these systems are in place and staff know why this is important and respond to ongoing changes and developments as a matter of course. Children feel safe at Whitehall and this is confirmed, not only by parents, but also seen during the fire evacuation where children responded calmly and quickly. This included the new Nursery cohort, who were unfazed as they sat happily in a sheltered gazebo with their teachers and support staff.

### **Inspection findings**

We agreed four key lines of enquiry as the focus of this inspection.

- The first line of enquiry was taken from the previous inspection report and focused on mathematics and opportunities to apply calculation skills to problems, practical activities and investigations. We also referred to the reading target, and pupils not making enough progress in developing wider reading skills. We observed a number of mathematics lessons together and agreed that the sessions are practical, carefully pitched at all levels and focus on ensuring a greater depth of understanding. This is also reflected in pupils' books. In reading, a range of initiatives have been introduced to raise the profile of this important skill and these are beginning to have an impact. Parental involvement is increasing; pupils have access to high-quality resources; access to the library has increased, which pupils really value. The culture of reading still needs to be sustained in order to secure further improvement and has been identified as an additional target.
- The second line of enquiry took account of the curriculum and whether it is sufficiently broad and balanced to support good outcomes for all groups of pupils from the early years to Year 6. The school is continuing to focus on outcomes in English and mathematics, but has increased the provision for other curriculum areas as it rightly sees these as a priority. PE, computing, with specific reference to e-safety, and writing across the curriculum, such as through science, are key

features in timetabling. Highly skilled phase leaders are carefully deployed during morning lessons to act as the third teacher in each year group. This approach is enabling teachers to plan tightly focused lessons that are more carefully matched to the needs of pupils who are progressing more rapidly as a result.

- The third key line of enquiry was around leadership and the current actions of school leaders to raise outcomes. It was evident when meeting your middle leaders that the commitment of leadership extends beyond the senior leadership team. Your middle leaders are committed to leading learning and raising the profile of their subject. This is infectious and subject leaders have confidently identified their priorities and know how this will help raise outcomes. They are firmly on this journey and current pupil progress shows an upward trend.
- Finally, we agreed to consider attendance and we discussed how the school is tackling absence and persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEN and EHC/Statements. The school has identified a range of strategies to improve attendance for all pupils, such as reward systems, engaging with parents and through more formal routes, such as involving the welfare officer. This has met with some success; however, it is the rapid improvement of attendance for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and education health and care plans on which the school must be congratulated. The school has addressed the main issues and made changes, with governor support, and this has led to rapid improvement.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to recognise that certain groups, such as summer-born boys, perform less well in phonics and focus on strategies to overcome this.
- continue to develop the culture of reading so that this is sustained through the range of reading initiatives and interventions that are already showing positive signs. This will lead to stronger outcomes in reading and writing for all groups of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Paula Craigie  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I held meetings with you, your deputy and assistant head, key stage phase leaders, middle leaders, the chair of governors and spoke to a representative from the local authority. I spoke briefly with parents as they dropped off their children in the morning and I took account of the responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire completed by 21 parents. I spoke informally with staff and children and analysed the three staff survey responses and 325 pupil responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire. Together, we observed teaching and learning both indoors and outside from Nursery to Year 6 and watched a small intervention activity led by the teacher of the deaf. I looked at samples of pupils' English and mathematics books from Year 1 to Year 6, including pupils from the Deaf Unit and then observed them in their lessons. I also reviewed a wide range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, and the single central record and other documentation relating to safeguarding.