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23 February 2018

Mr Mike Hirst  
Headteacher  
Seven Mills Primary School  
Malabar Street  
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London  
E14 8LY

Dear Mr Hirst

### **Short inspection of Seven Mills Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2018, 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 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. The school is a happy, caring place with a real sense of community. Pupils enjoy coming to school and display high commitment and enthusiasm for learning. They work hard. Their progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly in line with national averages by the end of Year 6. One parent's comment, typical of others, was: 'The school's atmosphere and environment is always positive for the pupils and their parents too.' The majority of parents and carers praise the school highly. They value your leadership and all the school has to offer.

Pupils of all ages play well at breaktimes in the playground. Staff are on hand, offering encouragement and joining in when appropriate. At the end of play, pupils calmly line up and swiftly enter the buildings to return to their lessons. Pupils are polite and welcoming, and are proud of their school. They are confident that they can go to an adult with any concern and it will be resolved.

The engaging curriculum includes many opportunities to learn beyond school. Regular visits to places of interest enrich pupils' learning. Pupils also benefit from attending a range of after-school clubs, including art and sporting activities.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the ways in which children in the early years build up their knowledge of letters and sounds. Leaders

have successfully addressed this area. Children in the early years are taught phonics well. By the end of Year 1, the proportion of pupils who meet the standard expected for their age is now similar to that seen nationally.

Governors and school leaders work well together. You provide governors with detailed information about pupils' achievements. They challenge you appropriately to ensure that suitable actions are in place to address areas that require further development. Governors seek appropriate training to ensure that they are increasing their knowledge about their roles and responsibilities.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pre-employment checks on staff meet requirements. There is ongoing training for staff and governors to ensure that they know how to keep pupils safe. Leaders work with outside agencies effectively to support pupils and their families well. They know when to seek external advice and involve appropriate agencies when needed. Leaders have built up close relationships with families; consequently, communication is effective with pupils and families who may be experiencing difficulties.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at the following aspects of the school's work:
  - how leaders ensure that the children in the early years make good progress
  - how leaders ensure progress for the most able pupils in writing and mathematics
  - how leaders ensure that standards in reading are improving at key stage 1.
- At the end of the early years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been increasing slowly, but remains below the national average. Most children enter the early years with skills typically below those expected for their age, especially their communication and language skills.
- Reflecting the strong teaching in Nursery and Reception classes, children are now making good progress from their starting points. Adults in the early years know the children well. They use the school's assessment tracking to plan a rich and creative curriculum for the children. Support for children is well targeted by adults. As a result, children learn effectively in an engaging and happy environment.
- The second area that we agreed to look at was the challenge for most-able pupils in writing and mathematics. This is because a below-average proportion of most-able pupils made the progress expected of them in writing and mathematics in 2017. As a result, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standard at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average.
- We visited all classes to observe how teachers had planned their lessons to

challenge the most able pupils, and the outcomes in pupils' books. The picture was mixed. Teachers with good subject knowledge promote high-quality writing. The most able writers use powerful words and complex sentences accurately.

- In mathematics, however, opportunities for pupils to extend their learning are not being developed. In some cases, the most able pupils are set more work to do, but at the same level of challenge as for all pupils. Therefore their progress is too slow.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching confirms that the effective strategies used by some adults to challenge the most able pupils are not yet embedded across all classes. You know that successful practices can be shared more widely in order to improve the most able pupils' progress.
- Finally, we looked at pupils' progress in reading in key stage 1. Over the last few years, reading standards have improved, but are not yet as high as expected. Your school improvement plan has made reading a top priority.
- The teaching of reading is now strong. Consequently, pupils are now reading well and making good progress. They use their phonic knowledge successfully to work out unknown words. They understand what they have read.
- Adults have chosen books and activities that are appropriately challenging for pupils of all abilities. The adults working with groups of pupils ask probing questions to ensure that they understand what they are reading. Also, specialist teaching support is well targeted. As a result of your actions, pupils' progress in reading is improving.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the good strategies used by some teachers to extend the writing skills of most-able pupils are shared across the school to promote consistently strong practice
- in mathematics, pupils are given work that is increasingly challenging when they are ready for it, not more of the same work.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Harvey  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, your deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, the school business manager, the early years leader and a group of governors. I also spoke to a representative from the local authority. I considered 35 responses to the Parent View online survey, including eight written comments. With you or your deputy headteacher, I observed teaching and learning across all classes, including the early years. I looked at a sample of books in writing and mathematics from all year groups. I heard some pupils read. I observed pupils at breaktimes and spoke with them informally. I also considered a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, governance and pupils' progress.