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Mrs Ziz Chater
Headteacher
Dollis Infant School
Pursley Road
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Dear Mrs Chater

Short inspection of Dollis Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 20 February 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 your school was judged to be good in January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

You, together with your senior leaders and governing body, are determined that pupils get the best start to their education at Dollis Infant School. Having previously been the school's deputy headteacher, and then one of two co-headteachers, you took up the post of headteacher in April 2016. Since that time you have developed your senior leadership team and increased its capacity to promote school improvement. You and your senior leaders work closely together and are unified in your approach and aspirations.

You give high priority to developing and maintaining effective relationships with parents and carers. You make sure that they have the right support so that they are able to help their children at home. You have gained the trust and respect of the school community. It is clear from parents' comments that the school's curriculum is broad, and appropriately enhanced by extra-curricular activity. Parents comment about their children's excitement at attending school and their enjoyment of their learning. They are able to talk about the progress their children have made during their time at the school.

You and your colleagues also contribute to education provision locally through partnership with other infant schools. It is important to you that the school benefits from regular scrutiny of its work. You achieve this through engagement with other headteachers and through seeking the views of the local authority. This approach

helps you to maintain a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Your evaluation of these is accurate. As a result, you are tackling the right areas in order to improve the quality of provision, and pupils' outcomes. You agree appropriately challenging targets for pupils' outcomes in cooperation with the local authority. However, we agreed that it would be helpful to generate shorter-term milestones from these overall goals in order to track the rate of progress over the course of the academic year.

You are acutely aware of the needs of the very large proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language and of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This results in you taking a highly inclusive approach to your work, a value promoted equally strongly by governors. You capitalise on the opportunities which present themselves, for example utilising the skills of a parent to lead workshops for parents of Afghan heritage.

The report published following your previous inspection recommended that you raised the level of challenge for the most able pupils. The proportion of pupils who exceeded expectations at the end of the Reception Year and went on to do well at the end of key stage 1 in 2017 was similar to that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. While you are pleased with this, you know there is more to do to ensure that most-able pupils achieve all they are capable of. The previous inspection report also referred to the need to improve the effectiveness of middle leaders. You now have higher expectations of these leaders. They now take greater responsibility for analysing pupils' performance in their subject and for identifying relevant developmental needs. Discussion with leaders indicates that a range of activities are used to determine the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.

You and your team understand the importance of pupils attending school regularly. It is apparent from the school's website, published newsletters and from displays in the school that the topic is promoted at every opportunity. Your newsletters present a clear and unambiguous set of expectations. As a result of your robust approach, pupils' attendance is now above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent dropped significantly between 2016 and 2017.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have a thorough approach to safeguarding. Staff are clear of your expectations of them and understand the procedures to follow. Checks on newly appointed staff are carried out and recorded thoroughly. All parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their children feel safe at the school. Similarly, responses to the staff questionnaire indicate that staff are confident that pupils are safe at the school.

Your staff keep detailed records of any concerns they have about pupils' well-being. The actions you take are clearly logged so that there is a clear history of each case. You know that it is important to have a systematic approach to this area of your work. Your safeguarding team reviews each case on a regular basis so that no one 'slips through the net'. You rightly continue to monitor cases, despite you having needed to take no action for some time.

You take the issue of online safety seriously. Helpful resources on the school website support parents to use the internet safely beyond the school. These resources include a presentation you shared during an information evening for parents and carers. Pupils spoken to during the inspection are aware of the practical strategies they can use to stay safe online. They know that it is unwise to share personal details and that they should speak to an adult if they are worried about any content they come across.

Governors and staff understand the importance of the 'Prevent' duty's agenda. There is no complacency about their attitude towards the topic. They know how important it is, despite the age of the school's pupils, to be vigilant.

You manage the physical security of the site well. Given the proximity of the school to a main road, you decided to add an additional gate to the route which allows access to, and exit from, the pre-school. This is indicative of your proactive and thorough approach.

Inspection findings

- A line of enquiry during the inspection was to consider the quality of the teaching of mathematics. This was due to outcomes in the subject being lower than the national average in 2017 both in attainment and in the progress pupils made from their starting points.
- You and your leaders have overhauled the teaching of mathematics. Pupils now have more frequent opportunities to explore concepts using practical resources. Rather than merely observing the teacher's demonstrations, pupils gain a secure understanding of concepts through a hands-on approach. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised. Teachers now expect pupils to justify their mathematical thinking and to structure their explanations accurately. Our visits to lessons illustrated how successful this focus has been. In Year 1, pupils explained the relative lengths of the pre-cut straws they were comparing. Pupils know that they are now expected to use mathematical vocabulary more than in the past; they explain that they now use more 'special' words such as parallelogram and quadrilateral. As a result of the development of mathematics, double the number of pupils are working at greater depth than at the same point in the last academic year.
- As a result of the training they have received, teachers' confidence has increased. They now evaluate more accurately when to progress to the next mathematics topic and when to dwell on a subject a little longer to ensure that pupils fully understand. Occasionally, the way teachers explain and demonstrate concepts is not sufficiently precise and as a result, pupils' misconceptions are not fully addressed. During our visits to lessons, we agreed that while expectations are now considerably higher than in the past, the most able pupils could be challenged even more.
- Another line of enquiry was to explore the reasons for pupils' strong outcomes in reading in 2017. You made some significant changes to the way reading was taught from September 2016. Outcomes in the Year 1 national phonics screening

check rose sharply from the 2016 figure. They are now above the national average.

- Along with training for staff, you increased the number of adults involved in the teaching of reading. This led to pupils receiving more tailored teaching at the right level. It increased the number of opportunities for pupils to engage in discussion about their reading with an adult. Adults now model clearly how to analyse texts, read expressively and how to make sense of tricky sentences. This has proved particularly helpful for pupils who speak English as an additional language. It has also benefited pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not read with their parents at home. This represents a good use of pupil premium funding.
- Alongside this approach, you provided workshops for parents. With their children joining each session part way through, parents were able to put what they had learned into practice. On the day of the inspection, I saw numerous parents reading with their children at the start of the school day, just before registration. It is clear that there is a positive approach to reading throughout the school.
- You and your leaders felt it was important for pupils to develop a love of reading. You introduced greater use of games involving phonics. This appealed to pupils and led to their greater engagement, and more robust understanding and application of their knowledge of sounds.
- The proportion of children who attain a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has risen over recent years but remains below the national average. I wanted to explore the skills and understanding that children have when they start school in order to consider the progress they make from their starting points. During the inspection we visited the pre-school, Nursery and Reception classes to check the effectiveness of the provision and to consider children's starting points. Entries in learning journals, recorded near to the time when children started school, illustrate their very low starting points. A very large proportion of children begin school with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age.
- In order to ensure that children make the best start in the Nursery, you and the governing body have established a pre-school. This currently caters for 12 children and has proved popular with the local community. You have made sure that children access appropriately selected and high-quality resources. Staff focus on the key attributes that enable children to get off to the right start. This includes their communication skills.
- I was interested to find out more about the progress made by pupils with low starting points in writing as this group of pupils performed less well than similar pupils nationally in 2017. The work in pupils' books shows that for previously low-attaining pupils, teaching is supporting their learning well. We looked at several examples of pupils' recent writing which compares favourably to their work at the beginning of the academic year. Where pupils were previously dependent on the support of their teacher, many now demonstrate independence and the ability to make phonetically plausible attempts at spelling new words.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of mathematics routinely includes accurate and precise explanation and demonstration of concepts
- development planning includes interim milestones so that progress towards annual targets can be more precisely monitored by leaders and governors
- the drive to challenge the most able is sustained.

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

Jeremy Loukes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and a group of teachers and teaching assistants. I also met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with a representative of the local authority. I held a telephone conversation with the leader of mathematics.

You and your deputy headteacher accompanied me on short visits to each classroom to observe teaching and learning.

I spoke with pupils during visits to classes, and held a meeting with a group of Year 2 pupils in order to find out about their experience of school.

I scrutinised a range of documentation including improvement plans, leaders' records of monitoring and documents about your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also reviewed documentation related to safeguarding including the records of staff recruitment checks, referrals to other agencies and staff records of concern.

I looked at the 41 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View and at the 16 free-text comments which parents had contributed. I met with parents before school in the playground and inside school at the beginning of the school day. Twenty-seven members of staff responded to the staff questionnaire.