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Joanne Pettifor
Acting Headteacher
Prior Weston Primary School and Children's Centre
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Dear Mrs Pettifor

Short inspection of Prior Weston Primary School and Children's Centre

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 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 October 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement, which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good, as a result of this inspection.**

In the short time you have been acting headteacher, you have managed to secure the support of staff, parents, carers and governors during a time of continuing change. You and your team are rightfully proud of the creative learning environment you have created and the positive relationships forged between staff and pupils in this highly inclusive school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is given high priority, and you fully exploit the many opportunities available due to your central location in the city. Music, art and physical education permeate the curriculum and encourage pupils' personal creativity, social and health education. Pupils respect and celebrate each other's differences and appear keen to work collaboratively in pairs and groups to support each other in this diverse and enriching environment. This inclusive and creative ethos is a strength of the school.

You, other school leaders and the governing body have begun to assimilate an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be developed further. You are clear that not enough pupils make the progress they should from their different starting points across the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. As a result, pupils' outcomes at the end of each key stage are not good enough. This is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils and the most able. You are all in agreement that there needs to be a period of reflection and evaluation of the current provision, so that improvements can be quickly realised, sustained, and have an impact on all pupils' progress over time. In particular, you acknowledge

that a review of the roles and responsibilities of leaders at all levels, including governance, is required, so that you can appropriately hold staff to account for pupil outcomes. You intend to construct a strategic school development plan that would set out clear actions, time scales and measurable outcomes. These measures would ensure that school improvement is swift and effectual.

Safeguarding is effective.

You rightly prioritise ensuring that all pupils are kept safe. Your team of designated safeguarding officers, led effectively by the designated safeguarding lead, ensures that safeguarding arrangements are highly effective and that records are detailed and of a high quality. Your creative building, set in the heart of the City of London, poses some potential risks and, consequently, you and your team are highly vigilant about keeping the site safe and secure. Staff and governors receive relevant and up-to-date training, including on the 'Prevent' duty, which helps staff identify potential signs of radicalisation and extremism. Staff understand the potential risks that pupils face in the community, including knife crime, female genital mutilation, domestic violence and neglect. As a result, they are highly vigilant and know what to do should they have reason to be concerned.

You and your team strive to build good relationships with all families, through the children's centre, the active parent-teacher association, and through local community links. In this way, you and your staff offer timely support and guidance to those that need it, involving external agencies as required. You know the most complex needs of some of your children and their families, and strive to provide 'around the family' support and care. Checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are in line with statutory guidance, and records are kept efficiently.

Pupils said that they are given a range of information on how to keep themselves safe, for instance when online or when walking home from school. While the majority enjoy coming to school, you are working hard with those families whose children do not attend as regularly as they should. Many pupils, especially those in the higher years, said that pupils are kind and considerate towards each other and that bullying is rare. However, some pupils and some parents are concerned that more work needs to be done to understand what constitutes bullying. They are of the view that more effective systems need to be put into place to address and remedy any incidents, should they occur, quickly and efficiently.

Inspection findings

- You, your team, and governors accept that pupils across the school do not make enough progress from their starting points. This is particularly true of the most able and disadvantaged, and this trend has continued over a three-year period. You have identified a number of areas that require attention in order to rectify this situation, and we explored these during the inspection.
- You have implemented a number of initiatives to improve pupils' attainment in reading. Phonics is taught daily to children in Reception and to pupils in Year 1. When ready, they move on to a supported reading programme, which enables

them to practise reading for meaning, fluency and speed. In key stages 1 and 2, pupils move on to reading more challenging texts for meaning and inference. Daily reading in class, access to a vibrant school library and reading for pleasure at home all complement this. Staff are trained to deliver the literacy programmes, but you acknowledge that the literacy team does not have the time capacity to check that staff are delivering the programmes systematically.

- You have recently instigated a whole-school focus on improving the quality of writing across the school, which is clearly linked to pupils' ability to read well and widely and to their speech and language skills. During the inspection, the most able pupils in Year 6 shared their writing about 'Robin Hood' and Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet'. They were proud of what they had achieved, and explained how they self- and peer-assess their writing before receiving comments from their teacher. However, you know that more needs to be done to ensure that more pupils achieve greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics than has been the case over the last three years.
- These new reading programmes are beginning to have a positive impact on the progress pupils make, and this was evident while hearing readers in Year 1. However, you and your team acknowledge that there needs to be a more holistic and strategic approach to the teaching of reading, writing, and speech and language development across the school. This is particularly true in the early years, where early and systematic development of these skills, particularly for disadvantaged children, would pay dividends for them as they move into Year 1.
- You and your team explained that you have introduced a play-based, child-centred approach in the early years, whereby children are able to pursue their own interests. Adults go to children and facilitate their learning through planning in the moment. The early years area is large and bright, and extends into a well-equipped outdoor area, full of apparatus, toys, materials and resources. Adults are on hand to ensure that children are safe and well looked after. Each week, staff focus on assessing and recording particular children's skills and aptitudes. Children come from a wide range of backgrounds and bring with them a range of skills and needs.
- While children appear to enjoy the learning environment, the proportion achieving a good level of development by the end of early years has been consistently below the national average. Disadvantaged children, in particular, have been stubbornly achieving much lower than their peers at the school and children nationally. In mathematics, reading and writing, there has been a decline, over time, in the proportion of disadvantaged children reaching the expected standard. The proportion of all children exceeding the expected standard in 2017 was particularly stark.
- You and your team accept that you need to urgently review the early years provision and evaluate how well it prepares children adequately for the demands of key stages 1 and 2.
- Almost half of the pupils at the school are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. Some of these pupils also have complex social and/or emotional needs, or have a special educational need (SEN) and/or disability. Although your team is effective at caring for these pupils' welfare needs, this group does not make the

progress it is capable of, and the gaps between the progress of these pupils and that of their peers are not closing quickly enough. Strategies to address this group's needs are not currently effective enough. In particular, in early years, baseline assessments do not lead to interventions that allow children to rapidly catch up with their classmates. Consequently, the gap widens as they go through school. You accept that this is now a whole-school priority.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they review and develop the roles and responsibilities of leaders at all levels so that there is a clear structure for holding staff to account
- they undertake a review of governance and the role governors play in holding senior leaders to account and challenging their actions
- they develop a strategic school development plan that sets out clear actions for improvement, with measurable and time-constrained outcomes
- they review how pupil premium funding is spent and the impact it has on the progress disadvantaged pupils make from their starting points
- they review the early years provision to ensure that leaders accurately assess children's abilities and needs on arrival, barriers to their learning are identified early, and strategies to alleviate this are quickly implemented and robustly monitored
- they focus on improving the progress all pupils make from their starting points, particularly disadvantaged pupils and the most able
- they make sure that they prioritise strategies to improve reading, writing, and speech and language in the early years in a systematic and planned way and this continues throughout key stages 1 and 2
- work is undertaken to help pupils understand what constitutes bullying, and they reassure parents and pupils that any incidents will be swiftly and effectively dealt with should they occur.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The headteacher was not present during the inspection.

I met with the acting headteacher and two senior leaders to discuss the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. I met with representatives from the governing body and with the local authority's head of school improvement for the primary sector. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including referrals to external agencies, and the register of safeguarding checks made on staff prior to their appointment. I visited lessons with the acting headteacher to gather evidence on particular strands of teaching, learning and assessment. I spoke to staff and pupils during informal times and in lessons. I listened to pupils reading and visited the early years foundation stage. I took account of the 53 written responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, the 20 responses to the staff questionnaire, and the 74 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey. I also took into account a letter written by a group of parents and an email from a parent, and spoke to parents at the end of the day as they collected their children.