

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 May 2018

Ms Zoe Howe
Headteacher
Hermitage Primary School
Vaughan Way
London
E1W 2PT

Dear Ms Howe

Short inspection of Hermitage Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your and your senior leaders' strong and ambitious leadership has ensured that the school continues to improve. Staff and governors share your aspirations and drive to provide the best education for pupils. Parents are very supportive of what the school does for their children. They particularly appreciate the caring ethos that you have created, allowing their children to thrive. The school is a vibrant, nurturing environment where staff help pupils to develop well, both academically and personally. This supports pupils' confidence and promotes strong attitudes to learning.

You have addressed the issues identified at the time of the previous inspection. In particular, you were asked to improve pupils' attendance, especially that of disadvantaged pupils. Working closely with governors and the local authority, you have taken appropriate action to address unauthorised absences and term-time holidays. I saw an assembly where pupils were rewarded for meeting attendance targets. You regularly communicate the importance of good attendance to parents. Your staff, including your dedicated attendance officer, provide valuable additional support to some families, such as when making home visits. These actions have contributed to a sustained improvement in attendance to above the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils. In addition, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has also decreased significantly.

You were also asked to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils in Years 5 and 6. Published data for the previous three years at the end of key stage 2 shows a much-improved picture for these pupils in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.

Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. The large majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, feel that their children are well looked after and make good progress. Almost all reported that they would recommend the school to another parent. Parents value this school. A view typical of many was, 'Brilliant community school, committed teachers, strong leadership.' This view was echoed by the many positive comments I received when I spoke to parents before school.

The pupils I spoke to share this positive view of the school. They were keen to talk to me and tell me about the curriculum and the wider opportunities that you provide. They cite the residential trip to France as a particular highlight, reinforcing the French that pupils learn right from the early years. Pupils relish the many leadership opportunities that you give them, including membership of the school council and working as 'internet safety warriors'. Through experiences such as these, pupils develop confidence and a strong sense of responsibility.

I must emphasise how impressed I was with the quality of the school's outdoor environment. It provides a lively, stimulating space for the pupils to thrive and is appreciated by all the school community. Creative work on display around the school is also of high quality and reflects a school at the heart of its community.

Governors are enthused by your leadership of the school. They are clear about the strengths and areas for development, and support and challenge you and your leadership team well. They are informed about the school's work through a range of external reviews and their own regular visits. Consequently, they recognise that leaders' evaluations could be sharper in assessing the impact of teaching on outcomes for all groups of pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that a culture of safeguarding is embedded among all staff, who are scrupulous in their duty to keep pupils safe. They challenge the local authority if they are not satisfied that enough has been done in response to a concern. This culture is reflected in the positive attitudes and confident manner of the pupils, who report feeling very safe at all times. The curriculum supports pupils well in maintaining their own safety, including keeping themselves safe online and when travelling to and from school.

In your role as the designated safeguarding leader you ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Policies, procedures and records are of a high quality and fit for purpose. Staff training, often by trainers from outside the local authority, is thorough and up to date. Registers of staff training are completed diligently. Staff have access to well-written policies and guidance and, as a result, have a very secure understanding of their individual responsibilities for safeguarding pupils.

Inspection findings

- At the start of this inspection we agreed to look at how leaders had secured strong progress in mathematics at key stage 2. You have worked with determination to improve the level of challenge for all groups in mathematics. Staff receive appropriate training and you have invested in resources to allow pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge.

- As a result, pupils have more opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. In the lessons I saw, and the books I looked at, I saw examples of how pupils further apply their mathematical skills in science, geography and history.
- While examining pupils' books, I was also impressed by the effectiveness of leaders' efforts to develop writing throughout the school. You told me that this has been a key part of your improvement planning. However, while much has been achieved, you agree that there is still work to do in ensuring that teaching is consistently strong in all subjects across all year groups.
- I was interested in finding out what actions leaders had taken to increase the number of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception Year. This was because in 2015, and further in 2016, the proportion of children in the early years who achieved this level of development declined to well below that seen nationally.
- Evidence from a range of documentation and observations in the early years indicates that you have taken appropriate actions to address this decline. You have redesigned the early years classrooms and changed the way in which classes are organised. You appointed a new early years leader, and have implemented a more structured approach to the teaching of reading and writing. You ensured that this was supported by opportunities for teachers to undertake regular training. This has enabled them to improve provision for the children further. As a consequence, following some improvement in 2017, the school's most recent performance information indicates that an increased number of children in the Reception Year are currently at a standard appropriate for their age.
- The subject leaders I met are passionate about their curriculum areas of responsibility and have good subject knowledge. They use this knowledge well to support staff to improve their teaching. A number of subject leaders are new to their roles. You have put in place appropriate training opportunities and support. As a result, subject leaders are developing their skills and having a positive impact on pupils' learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in learning and teaching are consistent in further strengthening standards
- emerging leaders' skills are quickly developed so that they are able to evaluate the school's work more sharply.

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

Jacques Szemalikowski
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your leadership team, and middle leaders. I spoke by telephone to a representative of the local authority, and met with two governors.

I met with a group of Year 6 pupils and talked with pupils at both break and lunchtime. I spoke to a number of parents at the school gate and one on the telephone. I looked at a range of pupils' work. You accompanied me on visits to classrooms, where together we observed teaching and learning, spoke with pupils and looked further at their work. I made additional unaccompanied visits to ensure that I saw every group in the school. I listened to pupils from Year 2 and Year 5 read. I examined a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, including the single central record of recruitment checks, child protection records and professional training certificates.

I took into account 33 parental responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View, and 33 text comments. I looked at reports from the school's partners evaluating its work. I examined the school's website and reviewed information about pupils' progress, attainment and attendance. I also considered the school's self-evaluation of how well it is doing, its improvement priorities and assessment information for current pupils.