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Ms Teresa Higgins
Headteacher
Highbury Quadrant Primary School
Highbury New Park
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Dear Ms Higgins

Short inspection of Highbury Quadrant Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You set clear expectations for staff and rigorously challenge underperformance. You and your governors have recently restructured the leadership teams to further develop the school and share expertise. You are now building capacity for middle leaders to take on more areas of responsibility, including safeguarding and attendance. Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the school.

The school has worked in close partnership with the local authority and other schools to raise standards, particularly in reading. You have taken action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The school has recently introduced a range of new initiatives and programmes to develop reading and comprehension skills in key stage 2. Extensive staff training has been provided for teachers and support staff to develop their skills in the teaching of reading. This is now leading to a rise in outcomes for pupils by the end of key stage 2. However, you do recognise that more needs to be done to continue to raise standards in reading and embed these new initiatives.

You have successfully addressed most of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Pupils spoken to were eager to show how they assess and evaluate their own work, and how they can improve their own learning. Teachers meet regularly to share best practice and collaborate well to ensure school improvement. Although standards are now rising, further work needs to be done to ensure that the most able pupils reach higher levels in reading.

Governors know the school and are ambitious for its future development. They are well informed and use a wide range of information to challenge and support the school. They set clear targets for leaders, which are linked to the school's priorities for improvement. Governors keep a close eye on the impact of leaders' work to ensure that pupils continue to receive a good standard of education.

The behaviour of most pupils in lessons is good because they find the lessons interesting. Pupils told me that good behaviour was expected, and they clearly understand right from wrong. Teachers know their individual pupils well. The school has changed its behaviour policy and systems, and provided extensive staff training in managing challenging behaviour. As a result, the very high level of exclusions in previous years has significantly reduced. Current records show that exclusions are now below the national average.

Parents and carers are positive about the school. Parents spoke about the good start their children receive in the early years. They said that their children are safe and well cared for. Parents recognise the recent improvements in communication between home and school and are keen for this to continue.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are of a high quality. You and your newly established safeguarding team ensure that thorough checks are made on all staff to ensure their suitability to work with pupils. The single central record is detailed and is checked regularly by the governing body.

Training for all staff is regular and kept up-to-date. Leaders are aware of the specific safeguarding concerns in the local area. They ensure that the school's work to keep pupils safe takes account of these concerns. The safeguarding team knows individual pupils and families well. Your team works effectively with external agencies to ensure that families have access to appropriate support services.

Pupils of all ages told me they feel safe in the school. They know to whom they can report any worries or concerns, and are encouraged by staff to share any issues troubling them. Pupils say they value this support. As a result, they also said that bullying rarely occurs in the school. Online safety is covered through parent workshops and in the school's curriculum. Pupils were able to give specific examples of how to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to examine the provision for children in the early years. For the last three years, the number of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has been below the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who achieved the standard expected for their age was considerably below the national average, especially in reading.

- Children enter Reception with a range of abilities that are below those that are typical for their age. The school has drawn effectively on support from the local authority on how to improve practice in the early years. Training for staff is helping to raise expectations of the quality of children's work and early reading. Staff visited other early years providers and collaborated with other schools on a project to raise standards. The school also introduced a more systematic approach to the teaching of phonics, starting in the Nursery Year. We saw phonics being applied in the Nursery where children were able to link letters to sounds, and then match initial letters to pictures. The Reception Year environment is bright and attractive for children to develop early reading skills, both indoors and outdoors. All areas of early years provision are well resourced. Workshops to support parents in helping their children read are regularly provided. This means parents are well informed about how they can support their child's learning and development at home.
- In both the Nursery and Reception Years, work in 'journals' shows that children are beginning to write simple letters and words using a cursive script. Teachers select books carefully to help disadvantaged pupils improve their reading skills. As a result, current assessment information shows that all children, including disadvantaged children, are making good progress in reading. By the time they leave the Reception Year, the difference in attainment between disadvantaged and other children in reading has diminished.
- Leaders identified the development of reading as being the key priority for the school. In 2016, reading attainment and progress were below the national average in both key stages, and for all groups of pupils. We agreed this as a key line of enquiry.
- You work in close partnership with the local authority and other schools to develop reading skills across the school. Phonics outcomes in Year 1 are either at or above the national average. Systematic phonics teaching now starts in the Nursery Year and pupils use these skills well in key stage 1. Recently, the school introduced a new reading programme in key stage 2. Pupils in Year 4 trialled this programme and are now making substantial progress this academic year. This has now been rolled out to all other year groups in key stage 2. Assessment systems are now rigorous, and give accurate information to help teachers plan the next steps for pupils. Current performance information indicates that progress is improving and levels of attainment in reading are increasing towards the national average. Teachers and support staff have received training and guidance to develop their practice. Nevertheless, you have correctly identified that further staff training is needed to strengthen the teaching of reading comprehension so that pupils attain the standards of which they are capable.
- Leaders are determined to promote an enjoyment and love of reading. The school library is well resourced, and is used on a regular basis by all classes. In Year 2, pupils have a wide range of books, and reading resources and texts are well matched to their abilities. We saw a library session where Year 2 pupils were learning how to classify and store new books in the correct place. Older pupils in Year 6 that I heard read, talked enthusiastically about reading and are mostly confident and fluent in their reading. They read challenging texts in many instances, and study texts in detail during lessons. Governors have ensured that

the use of pupil premium is effective in supporting disadvantaged pupils who require additional support with reading. The school is now planning to review its reading programme in key stage 1. However, you recognise that the school needs to embed these new programmes and systems over time to ensure higher standards.

- The final key line of enquiry concerned attendance and exclusions. In recent years, both absence and persistent absence were above average. Exclusions were well above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils, boys and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities were particularly affected.
- You set up a new team to tackle these key issues. New behaviour systems were introduced and external guidance and support were accessed. Extensive staff training was provided to all members of staff, including playground staff. Governors are well informed about these issues and are determined to drive forward even greater improvement.
- The attendance team has improved attendance so that it is now near the national average. A number of successful initiatives have been implemented, including a mixture of rewards and sanctions. Persistent absenteeism, however, still remains high. Fixed-term exclusions have significantly reduced, and are now below the national average for this year. Leaders are determined to maintain this upward trend.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress pupils make in reading continues to improve so that it is consistently strong across all year groups
- absence rates, particularly persistent absenteeism, continue to decline so that attendance is at least in line with the national averages.

I am copying this letter to 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

Sean Flood
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held discussions with you and other senior and middle leaders. I spoke with a representative from the local authority and held a meeting with six governors, including the chair of governors. I spoke with pupils in class, in structured settings and informally. I also spoke to parents. I observed pupils'

behaviour in class, in the playgrounds and as they moved around the school. I scrutinised pupils' work in a wide range of subjects. I heard readers across the school and spoke with pupils about the books they are reading. I also visited the Nursery and the provision for two-year-olds. I made visits to all classes alongside senior leaders. I examined the school's progress tracking information and assessment records. I scrutinised a wide range of documentation related to safeguarding, welfare and attendance. I looked at behaviour and bullying incident logs. I considered the responses of 36 parents to Parent View, and the responses of pupils and staff to Ofsted's online surveys and the school's own internal surveys.