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Ms Tracy Argent
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Argent

Short inspection of Woolmore Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 2019, 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 July 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You, leaders, governors and staff have together established a learning community with the school's pupils at the heart of everything the school does. The school is calm and purposeful, and the mutual respect between pupils and staff is demonstrable. The school and its classrooms are welcoming, exciting, vibrant and safe places to learn. The quality and standards of work in pupils' books are reflective of their extremely positive attitudes to learning and the consistency of strong teaching across the school. Pupils are articulate about the many positives in the school. They spoke about their enjoyment of the topics they study, the focus on reading and the way in which they are helped to be successful in their learning.

Since the last inspection the planned expansion of the school has continued at pace with almost 200 additional pupils on the school roll. Leaders have been highly effective at managing the increase in staff and established a highly collaborative team. They have successfully expanded the school's leadership at both senior and middle level to support teaching quality and pupils' pastoral needs. This includes the recent appointment of an assistant headteacher for the early years. There is already evidence of improvement in the early years. However, leaders acknowledge that

there is still some work to do to ensure the same consistency of learning as that of the rest of the school. The highly positive responses to the Ofsted questionnaire reflected the high morale of staff. Discussions with middle leaders, reinforced by my visits to classrooms, evidenced how well staff understand and support the school's priorities. This has led to an exceptionally well planned and layered curriculum that steadily builds pupils' experiences and their learning over time. As a result, pupils, regardless of their starting points and needs, make strong progress as they move across the school.

At the previous inspection leaders were asked to raise the expectations of what pupils can achieve and the feedback pupils receive on their work. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. Leaders have established thorough processes for monitoring impact of the school's priorities and actions in the school's improvement plan. Key questions, listed in the plan, are very effectively used to assess the impact of actions, make refinements and support staff. The expectations for teaching and assessment are clear. Shared planning and staff following the expectations for classroom practice have led to consistently high-quality teaching across the school. Pupils told me how much they enjoy lessons, the challenge they receive and how well they are learning. The significant increase in pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics in 2018 is testament to the impact that leaders are having in raising outcomes for pupils.

Parents told me of their confidence in the school and the high quality of education their children receive. One told me of the distance they travel to come to this school and that they cannot find a comparable school where they now live. This was affirmed in the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

The governing body is highly effective and supportive of leaders. They have a breadth of expertise and are clear on the school's vision and ethos. They routinely challenge leaders and do not rely on the information provided by leaders. They make every effort to find out for themselves about the quality of education that pupils receive through visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and views of parents, pupils and staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

- The leadership team have continued to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a relentless approach to safeguarding. Leaders and governors understand exceptionally well the community they serve, and the possible risks faced by children. The designated lead for safeguarding is knowledgeable and carries out her role with diligence and tenacity. Staff across the school are well trained in safeguarding. Additional topics include training in the prevention of radicalisation, mental health issues and female genital mutilation. As result, staff have a secure awareness of safeguarding matters, are always vigilant and quickly report their concerns. Record-keeping is meticulous so that leaders have a secure view of safeguarding at both individual and whole school level.

- Good links have been established with external agencies and referrals are appropriately and rapidly made, when required. The strengthened safeguarding team work together with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families get the help and support they need. The start and end of day contact with parents, open-door approach and regular coffee mornings all help both staff and parents support children's learning and well-being.
- All the required pre-appointment checks are rigorously carried out and accurately recorded on the school's single central record. Governors regularly check on the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements. Any absence is quickly followed up. Targeted work is improving the attendance of the few pupils who do not attend as regularly as they should.
- All of the pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. A view almost unanimously endorsed by parents spoken to during the inspection and the 45 who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on how well pupils are taught to read. This was because while attainment in reading has been sustained over the last three years, pupils' progress in reading fell in 2018. The teaching of reading has been prioritised and is currently the first of the school's three improvement priorities.
- The focus on reading pervades the school. Exciting book displays, routine use of the library, daily teaching of reading and pupil rewards are having a significant impact on pupils' progress in reading. Pupils love to read and can talk eloquently about the books they have read, why they enjoyed them and what they plan to read next. Pupils are keen to achieve the 'reading millionaire' award recognising how much they have read. The scheme aims to bridge the gap between the significantly lower number of words experienced on average by disadvantaged pupils compared to their peers. Leaders also recognise that such schemes also benefit those pupils learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The school's approaches have been carefully planned and implemented. One programme to encourage pupils to read, not only tracks their reading but also checks pupils' understanding of what they have read. Leaders say that they can see the increase in reading of a book or a particular author through this tracking, which is often as a result of pupils talking with their peers about the books they have read.
- The building blocks for teaching reading begin in the Nursery class so that pupils can get off to a rapid start in their phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) learning when they move to Reception. The strong teaching of phonics has resulted in above national expectations in the phonics check by the end of key stage 1. Most pupils enter key stage 2 able to read fluently. For the few whose phonics learning did not reach national expectations or are new to the school, intensive phonics teaching continues in Year 3. This is to ensure that these pupils quickly catch up so they can fully access the curriculum.

- Leaders and staff recognise the importance of pupils understanding of what they read. A new, effective, highly structured and well managed programme aims to help pupils get more from their reading through increased comprehension of the texts they read. Leaders are ensuring consistency through internal and external moderation of the programme.
- My second line of enquiry explored the reasons for the school's success in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils, who represent almost half the school roll, achieve as well as their peers.
- Leaders are clear about the two main barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils and others face. These are a lack of the necessary vocabulary and limitations in their life experiences to fully access and maximise their learning. Besides ensuring the highest quality of teaching, leaders have focused their efforts on developing a meaningful, relevant and connected curriculum. Each topic is planned to build on prior learning across the school year and also year on year. The development of subject vocabulary is carefully planned for each topic, with care given to the timing of word introduction, development of pupil understanding so they are then able to apply it in their work. Scrutiny of pupils' writing evidenced how well pupils secure and use broad range of age appropriate vocabulary. As one pupil said to me: 'Learning in reading helps us with our writing.'
- Leaders provide a broad range of opportunities for pupils to develop their life experiences. Within the curriculum topic learning is enhanced with well-planned visits. For example, a visit to the Globe Theatre to support Year 5 learning of Shakespeare and a trip down the River Thames to bring pupils' learning about London landmarks to life. Frequent opportunities for everyone to participate in sport, the performing arts, school projects, special events and theatre and museum visits all enrich pupils' lives on a daily basis. Volunteers and visitors, including those from the local business community, help raise aspirations and broaden the horizons of all pupils. This culturally rich curriculum not only benefits disadvantaged pupils but also ensures that none are left behind in this highly inclusive school.
- My final line of enquiry focused on how the school had developed the role and expertise of middle leaders. This was an area for improvement at the time of the last inspection. Further, the rapid expansion of the school from a one- to three-form entry school has led to an increase in middle leadership roles.
- All leadership roles are clearly defined and aimed at sustaining and improving the quality of education and care of pupils. Most middle leaders are relatively new in post. They spoke of leadership training to help them fulfil their roles in driving improvement and holding staff to account. This, they told me, had been supplemented with tailored professional development aligned to their roles. As a result, they feel equipped and confident to sustain previous initiatives, such as in mathematics, and implement new ones, such as in reading comprehension.
- A clear structure of accountability is in place with middle leaders holding their teams to account and reporting this up the chain to senior leaders. They use this to assist middle leaders with their areas of responsibility as well as in gaining an accurate picture of the impact of actions. Middle leaders feel trusted to do their

jobs. Nonetheless, they value the supportive meetings with senior leaders as significantly contributing to the consistency and quality of practice across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- build on the recent improvements in the early years foundation stage to support children's learning and development by ensuring that the classrooms and outdoor areas provide the same vibrant, exciting and celebratory learning environments as in the rest of the school.

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

Angela Corbett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, and the deputy headteacher who is headteacher one day a week, senior and middle leaders, and the business manager. I also met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority who acts as the school improvement partner. With you and the deputy headteacher I visited classrooms across the school to observe teaching and learning, look at books and speak with pupils about their work. With the assistant headteacher responsible for the early years I also visited the Nursery and Reception indoor and outdoor areas. I met with eight key stage 2 pupils to seek their views of the school and heard a small group of pupils in Years 2 and 6 read. I met parents as they dropped off their children at the start of the school day and spoke with another parent by telephone. I looked at key documents including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plan and documents relating to safeguarding. I took account of the 45 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, including free-text responses, and 52 responses to the staff survey.