

Inspection of Seven Mills Primary School

Malabar Street, Isle of Dogs, London E14 8LY

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Seven Mills is a friendly primary school, nestled under the towers of Canary Wharf and serving its local community. Pupils appreciate the wider opportunities their school provides, like learning to surf on the Kent coast. One pupil, echoing the views of many, said: 'Teachers are kind, and they help you when you are stuck with your learning. I feel safe in this school.'

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They ensure that there are high levels of expertise in teaching early reading and developing pupils' spoken English. This particularly benefits the many pupils who speak English as an additional language. All pupils learn and achieve well here.

From their first days, pupils benefit from adults' care and attention. In the early years, adults teach children how to follow the day-to-day routines of school life, and the skills that they need, like sharing and taking turns. Older pupils show high levels of respect to staff. For example, they settle down quickly in lessons and get on sensibly with their work. Pupils get on well with each other and incidents of bullying are rare. Adults are quick to sort out any problems. They ensure that pupils behave well and that they are kept safe.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders want pupils to be effective learners with moral purpose. They have developed an engaging curriculum, and have enriched it with many visits and wider opportunities, such as high-quality musical performances.

Leaders have taken the time to think about what they want pupils to know and remember. In music, for example, children in the early years and younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 encounter the joy of music through singing. They learn how to control the sounds they make with their voices. Older pupils take this further when they learn about improvisation and singing three-part harmony. In a few subjects, leaders have not precisely identified the specific knowledge that should be taught for pupils to build up the deep body of knowledge that they need. In the curriculum for early years, leaders do not ensure that children have sufficiently well-targeted opportunities to develop strength and coordination in the use of their fingers, wrists and arms. As a result, some older pupils have not acquired the basic physical skills they need. This makes it difficult for them to learn a pencil or pen grip that enables them to write with fluency.

Leaders have thought carefully about how pupils will learn to read and develop a love of books. In the early years, the school prioritises children's communication and vocabulary. Children benefit from extra help as soon as they need it. This lays strong foundations for children's later learning. Leaders have embedded a well-sequenced phonics programme. Pupils regularly take home books which help them to practise their reading. Any pupils who might be falling behind are quickly spotted and given additional teaching to ensure they keep progressing. As a result, pupils become

fluent readers who enjoy the wide range of books in their classroom and the school's impressive library. They talk with confidence and maturity about what they are reading, losing themselves in imaginary worlds and exploring moral issues.

In most subjects, teachers present subject content well and use activities that help pupils to apply their knowledge. For example, in mathematics, pupils were able to succeed at displaying information on a bar graph. They explained confidently what they were doing and why. This was because teaching had first made sure that pupils had all the mathematical background knowledge that they needed. Occasionally, teachers do not specifically check that pupils have understood what they have been learning. When this happens, pupils are not helped to correct any mistakes and are not as well prepared for their future learning as they could be.

Leaders identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They make sure that teachers know how to support these pupils and how to adapt their teaching, where appropriate. For example, teachers break down tasks into smaller steps. Where pupils have more complex needs, teachers carefully make further adaptations so pupils can successfully work towards their individual targets.

The curriculum enables children in early years to benefit from demanding activities, such as balancing on climbing frames and jumping off safely. Activities like these help children to develop their confidence, preparing them well for any future learning which they might find difficult. Older pupils are also keen to learn. They have very positive attitudes to all aspects of school life.

Leaders give pupils lots of opportunities to develop their leadership skills and to learn about active citizenship. For example, pupils on the school council recently led a consultation on school meals. This led to changes in the menus offered. Pupils also regularly raise money for their chosen causes. All pupils take part in a rich programme of visits and residential trips, with thoughtful adaptations made to include pupils with SEND. Leaders also aim to help pupils discover talents that they did not know they had, for example through their work with one of London's orchestras and a musical theatre project. Pupils with SEND are supported well through the use of adapted instruments and additional music sessions.

Leaders and governors support the local community. For example, they help children to get the best start to their education through funding full-time nursery places. Leaders arrange for parents and carers to take part in informal coffee mornings and workshops so they can support their children's learning. However, some parents said that they have not been able to share their views about the school.

Staff are proud to work in the school and appreciate the support that leaders offer.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders think carefully about how to keep pupils safe. This includes giving advice to parents on keeping their children safe at home. Leaders prioritise teaching about water safety as the school is close to the River Thames, in an area where there are many docks and canals. Pupils are also taught about other topics, such as how to stay safe when they go online.

Pupils know they can speak to a trusted adult if anything is troubling them. They can share any concerns in one of the 'worry boxes'. Staff are trained so they know how to spot any pupil who might be at risk. Leaders make prompt referrals to external agencies when necessary. They support families who may need additional help effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, teachers' checking of pupils' understanding is not secure. This can lead to pupils developing gaps in their knowledge and skills. Leaders need to ensure that teachers routinely check and address pupils' misconceptions quickly, so that they are ready for future learning.
- In some foundation subjects, leaders' curricular thinking does not identify the subject-specific knowledge that pupils must learn before moving on to new content. This holds pupils back in deepening their subject knowledge and understanding. Leaders should ensure that their thinking in all foundation subjects helps pupils to build securely on their subject-specific knowledge.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	100931
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10255399
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jill Baker
Headteacher	Tom Foster
Website	www.sevenmills.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school organises and manages a breakfast club on site.
- Leaders do not currently make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, music and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at the curriculum in a range of other subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils.

- Inspectors met with members of the governing body and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with leaders who are responsible for safeguarding and behaviour. They reviewed a wide range of documentation, including pre-employment checks on staff, and attendance and behaviour information. Inspectors also considered the views of parents, staff and pupils to help evaluate the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and to the online surveys for staff and pupils. They also spoke with parents at the school gate.

Inspection team

Julian Grenier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lisa Strong

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023