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Dear Ms Daly

Short inspection of Cubitt Town Infants' School

Following my visit to the school on 26 January 2016, 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your personal leadership is a clear force for improvement and your ambition has ensured that the school's improvement has been sustained over time. Staff are committed to supporting the development of every child. You and your team make sure that all pupils experience an exciting but relevant range of activities, experiences and resources. You enable this from the weekly visits to a local farm, planned, creative, artistic opportunities and visits, and workshops and outings, including regular opportunities for ice-skating. You ensure a broad and balanced curriculum is accessible for all to enrich their learning experiences.

Over the past four and a half years, teaching has remained good. Many children enter early years with skills and knowledge below what is typical for their age. From low starting points, pupils have continued to make good progress. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are now in line with the national average in reading and writing and well above the national average in mathematics.

Areas identified during the last inspection have been successfully addressed. Teachers are ensuring that work is consistently well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils, so that it is neither too hard nor too easy. As a result, the proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels at Key Stage 1 are above the national average, especially in reading and mathematics. Teachers are giving pupils

clear feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Middle leaders are more systematically checking the quality of teaching and learning and ensuring that pupils act on the feedback they receive. However, you and your literacy leader are aware that further attention is needed to ensure that all pupils make as rapid progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics. At the previous inspection, inspectors noted that governors were not involved enough in checking the work of the school. Governors have now formed a curriculum committee, which effectively oversees the impact of initiatives identified on the school improvement plan.

Since 2013, attendance has stalled. In 2015 it was in the lowest 10% nationally for all primary schools, largely due to a significant chicken pox, and later, winter norovirus, outbreaks. The school purchases good support from the local authority and strong systems are in place to track whole-school attendance. As a result, current attendance is now in line with the national average for 2014/15. Despite this, you are aware that improving whole-school attendance further remains a priority.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your senior leader for safeguarding have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that staff are trained in safeguarding procedures. The single central record and arrangements for checking the suitability of staff to work with children meet requirements. Members of the governing body have attended training on safeguarding, including safer recruitment practices, preventing radicalisation and managing allegations against members of staff. Governors regularly visit the school and have audited the provision for e-safety and the promotion of British values within the curriculum.

Pupils value the visibility and accessibility of staff, saying that they feel safe and that there is always an adult, or one of their friends in school, whom they can talk to if something is worrying them or they need help. They are rightly proud of their school and enjoy the range of activities and trips that are an integral part of the school's curriculum. The site is secure and pupils move calmly and purposefully to play, and between activities. Parents rightly reflect that their children are happy and feel safe at school, as evidenced by their responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection findings

- You have created well-established relationships between home and school and this is further promoted with the activities on offer at your 'Community House'. Parenting programmes have supported parents in learning craft skills, which they then teach to pupils across the school. Stunning examples of glass painting encouraged pupils and parents to learn new art skills and to identify the different wild flowers in Britain. Bold, beautiful, silk paintings were evident, inspired from the pupils' recent work on fossils. Art, a focus for the past year, is a real strength of the provision.

- Middle leaders are increasingly involved in reviewing the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. They look at pupils' books and assessment information, and they work alongside staff in planning and in teaching lessons. This is ensuring that timely interventions are put in place for pupils who are in need of additional support. Leaders have a clear overview of the interventions within their areas of responsibility and monitor the quality and impact of these well.
- Leaders provide staff with clear expectations for written and oral feedback to pupils, and this is consistently effective across the school. Regular team planning meetings in mathematics and literacy are helping to ensure that class teachers have a good knowledge of each pupil. As a result, work is consistently matched to pupils' needs. This consistency of expectation is being extended beyond the core subjects. The school improvement plan identifies a focus on improving the full curriculum on offer as the school implements the requirements of the new National Curriculum. As a result, new schemes of work have been developed in art, with a focus on the progression of skills. This move from a topic-based approach to a skills-based approach, and the implementation of sketch books, are ensuring that art activities are matched well to individuals' needs. The result is the high-quality art work seen during the inspection.
- Governors are proactive and deeply committed to the school's success. They execute their duties conscientiously. They are matching their personal skills and expertise to check the different aspects of the school's provision. Governors test leaders' self-evaluation by carrying out termly visits and report back in detail at full governing body meetings. For example, at one of their link visits, the focus was to ensure value for money for the provision of activities from the local farm. Questions were raised regarding how these planned off-site activities fit into the new National Curriculum and the impact of this provision on pupils' learning. Governors found from their observations of pupils' engagement at the farm and their subsequent learning back at school that all areas of the school's science curriculum are suitably covered except the unit of study on materials, concluding that the provision represented good value for money.
- Governors are aware that children on entry have skills and knowledge largely below what is typical for their age. They are also aware of the school's continued focus on promoting talk. Talk is encouraged as a means to support writing throughout the school. Governors meet school leaders regularly to check on progress. On one link visit, they observed how pupils' writing develops over a week, viewing work in books and the implementation of the school's recent marking and feedback policy in English and the use of the new outdoor area for Reception. This has provided them with valuable evidence of more writing being recorded in pupils' books and a clearer picture of progress in this area. There is also evidence of the newly developed Reception and Nursery outdoor areas supporting more opportunities for early writing skills. Inspection activity confirms this.

- In the early years, adults regularly track children's achievements and capture this in the children's individual learning journals. They collect important evidence about each child's learning and personal development using photographs, samples of work and the child's comments, recording their good progress through the early years. They use this information to plan further relevant activities. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development rose in 2015. It now exceeds the local authority average and the gap has narrowed between the school and the national average.
- Parents who came to collect their children from the morning Nursery session told me they were highly satisfied with the school. They reported that staff are approachable and supportive across a range of issues, including supporting children with special educational needs.
- All staff are overwhelmingly proud to work at the school. One member of staff wrote in the inspection questionnaire, 'Cubitt Town Infants' has a family feel and is a happy place to work. The senior leadership team is approachable and provides great support to teachers. Children's experiences are at the heart of everything'. Another wrote, 'the ethos of the school is based on supporting children and families'. One member of staff summed it up simply by saying, 'this school is an absolute joy to work in and I have enjoyed every day I have worked here'.
- Pupils are actively encouraged to take risks and try something new such as horse-riding or ice-skating. The way the school utilises its local environment, from reading partnerships to links with the local farm, results in broadening pupils' experiences. These varied experiences are further supporting their speech and language development and giving them greater confidence and excitement as learners. The children here learn through activities that enable them to make sense of the world around them, and to explore and communicate their thoughts. This is supporting attainment, which is now above the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. However, you are not complacent, and are fully aware that these outcomes and the very good progress made by pupils are not as significant for those at an earlier stage of writing. As a result, you and your literacy leader have swiftly put plans in place to review the school's strategy for supporting independent writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is continued focus on improving the attendance of pupils, and that additional ways of working with parents to support their child's attendance are developed
- pupils make as rapid progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics by further refining the school's strategy for teaching talk to support independent writing.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for the London borough of Tower Hamlets. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jean Thwaites
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and some middle leaders, including the head of the early years, and with staff responsible for attendance and those who carry out checks that staff are suitable to work with children. I met with a representative from the local authority, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. I considered the views of 27 parents as recorded on the online survey, Parent View, and spoke to parents as they collected their children from the nursery. I also considered the 24 questionnaires completed by members of staff. You and I visited the classrooms together to observe pupils in their lessons and look at their work. We also visited the breakfast club and the early morning gymnastics club. I met with a group of pupils who shared some examples of their learning with me. Documents and records relating to pupils' achievement, teaching, attendance and safeguarding were scrutinised. I also took account of leaders' own evaluations of the school's performance.