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Mrs Christine Lamb  
Headteacher  
Mayespark Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Lamb

### **Short inspection of Mayespark Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2018 with Joy Barter, Ofsted Inspector, 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 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Mayespark is a warm, friendly and nurturing place for pupils, parents, carers and staff to be. Pupils benefit from an education underpinned by key values, including courage, respect, determination, tolerance and unity. Pupils try their best to demonstrate these values, and this helps them to develop as young learners and young British citizens. As one pupil put it, 'This school has opened my eyes to what I can do.' Pupils are confident, interested and interesting young people, who think deeply about their learning, their school and their lives.

You have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. This has been within the context of significant changes to your teaching staff and leadership structure. You provide strong leadership to your staff. Your committed leadership team shares your vision for school improvement. Collectively, you have a good impact on improving teaching, learning and assessment, which results in improving pupils' academic results.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They are highly committed and reflective. They are keen to improve their skills to enhance pupils' education further. They respond well to training and professional development and improve their practice because of it.

You know your school well. Together with the leadership team, you have been rigorous and accurate in identifying the key aspects of the school's work that need

to be strengthened. As a result, work in pupils' books and the school's assessment information show that pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is improving as a result of strong leadership and thoughtful, effective use of the pupil premium funding.

Leaders have worked effectively to improve attendance and decrease the incidences of persistent absence. As a result, attendance is in line with national averages. The rate of persistent absence has decreased significantly this academic year and is below that seen nationally.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and governors ensure that all statutory safeguarding requirements are met. Leaders with overall responsibility are highly experienced, knowledgeable and very well organised. They are rigorous in their approach to keeping the pupils of Mayespark safe. Staff understand and use the school's referral system consistently and with rigour. As one teacher said, 'We don't take anything lightly.'

Staff have thorough, up-to-date and regular training in all aspects of safeguarding. They are vigilant and are confident that they know what signs to look for to consider whether a pupil is at risk from radicalisation, extremism or female genital mutilation.

Leaders make all necessary referrals to external services swiftly and show great persistence in ensuring that pupils receive the care and support that they need.

Pupils said that they feel safe at school and parents agreed that they are safe and well cared for. Pupils show a good understanding of e-safety and are sensible in reporting any concerns regarding inappropriate use of social media. Leaders deal with any issues swiftly and effectively. Mayespark is a safe and happy community.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on a range of inspection activities which focused on reading. We looked to see how successful the school's curriculum is in raising pupils' achievement in reading and developing a love of reading in pupils. We considered how leaders have supported teachers to improve aspects of their teaching of reading since the previous inspection.
- Leaders have ensured that staff have received training and professional development, which has enhanced the way pupils learn how to understand what they read. This complements the school's effective work to develop pupils' spoken language. Staff feel very well supported and appropriately challenged by leaders to improve their skills.
- Leaders have been successful in ensuring that all staff place a strong emphasis on teaching comprehension skills. Staff select high-quality children's literature to inspire and motivate pupils to read. Teachers across the school ask questions that deepen pupils' understanding about the texts they read. Staff place

appropriate emphasis on introducing, explaining and developing pupils' vocabulary. This is having a positive impact and helps pupils to enhance their writing skills. For example, pupils in key stage 2 had a thought-provoking conversation about the word 'remorse', which had cropped up in the class text. They then composed sentences using the word accurately.

- Teachers benefit from the support they receive from leaders in planning, teaching and checking on the progress pupils make. As a result, the teaching of comprehension skills has improved since the last inspection and continues to improve. Consequently, pupils across the school make good progress in reading. Leaders recognise that some staff need further guidance on the ongoing assessment of pupils' understanding of what they read in order to enhance pupils' progress even further.
- Leaders have supported staff in embedding a phonics programme across the school. Pupils' outcomes in the Year 1 phonics check have been above the national average for the past three years. Middle leaders check, support and evaluate the teaching of phonics across the school. However, these checks do not focus sharply enough on ensuring that all staff who are responsible for teaching phonics enunciate the sounds that letters make correctly. As a result, there is some lack of consistency with this. Furthermore, staff do not routinely pick up on pupils' misconceptions during phonics sessions. Occasionally they 'deliver' the programme without assessing the impact of their teaching on the pupils. Leaders have identified that their monitoring needs to focus more sharply on this aspect of phonics teaching in order to strengthen achievement even further.
- Our second focus for the inspection was to consider how effectively the governing body checks on the impact of the pupil premium funding. In particular, we looked at how well the additional funding is used to raise disadvantaged pupils' achievement in reading. Governors support and challenge leaders well. Pupil premium funding has been spent carefully. This has led to significant improvements to disadvantaged pupils' confidence, attitudes to learning and academic attainment. For example, selected pupils benefit from working on activities in a forest setting. Pupils said that this has improved their confidence to tackle new challenges and solve problems. Consequently, they are able to benefit fully from the specific reading support that they receive. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making stronger progress this year than previously, and any differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others are diminishing.
- Our next focus for the inspection was how effectively the school's curriculum supports pupils to read widely across different subjects, for a range of purposes. I found that this is a key strength of the school. For example, in Year 6 English lessons, pupils used information texts to develop research skills. Pupils were able to apply their research skills to enhance their understanding of the science topic, electricity.
- The school does not have a library, but staff make good use of the public library to ensure that pupils have exposure to a wide range of reading material. Book corners in classrooms are typically well resourced and inviting, and links to

subjects across the curriculum are clear. Reading records show that pupils read regularly and widely.

- We also considered how effectively teachers assess pupils' phonic knowledge. This was because progress at the end of Year 6 in reading in 2017 was well below pupils' progress nationally. Teachers regularly assess pupils' phonic knowledge and use the information in order to meet pupils' needs. I found that not all staff who teach phonics are swift in picking up pupils' misconceptions or errors. They do not all routinely check that pupils join in when they are asked to repeat out loud the sounds that they are learning. Not all staff consistently enunciate letter sounds correctly. Leaders have not systematically and regularly checked that all adults are confident and effective in teaching phonics.
- Because of strong leadership and effective professional development, there is a consistent approach to teaching comprehension skills across the school. Teachers regularly and systematically assess pupils' skills so that any pupil who is at risk of underachieving is identified swiftly. They are well supported in this by leaders. Some staff are more confident than others in assessing progress in the different aspects of reading comprehension. Occasionally, targets that teachers set for pupils are not tailored to meet their needs. Pupils who read with inspectors were generally confident in using their phonics skills when they came to any difficulty with words, but not all were as confident in showing their understanding of what they had read.
- Our final focus for the inspection was to consider how well leaders involve parents and carers in their children's reading development. Leaders think creatively and sensitively about how to best invite and involve parents to work in partnership with them to develop reading. In the early years, there is a high take up from parents who come into school on a regular basis to read with their own children and other pupils. Parents are encouraged to read with their children every night, and pupils are clear about the expectations that they read regularly. Inspectors reviewed a range of home-school reading records. Many have been regularly and diligently completed by pupils or by their parents. All show that pupils are reading regularly at home and at school and that they are making progress in reading increasingly challenging books.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders keep a close check on the teaching of phonics to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching across the school
- teachers' assessment of comprehension skills is embedded across the school and leads to improved outcomes in reading.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Redbridge. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Dollner  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We held meetings with you and a member of the governing body to discuss the school's self-evaluation as well as the actions leaders have taken to maintain the good quality of education. We visited classrooms in each year group with leaders to observe learning and talk to pupils about their work. We spoke to pupils at breaktime, in classrooms and as they moved around the building. We heard pupils read and interviewed a group of pupils about their experience at school. We reviewed samples of pupils' work and assessment information to evaluate pupils' outcomes in reading over time. A range of safeguarding documentation was reviewed, including records of child protection concerns and the single central record of pre-employment checks on staff. We considered the views of parents through informal discussions and the 46 responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View. We held a meeting with staff and spoke to them informally to gather their views.