

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Seven Mills Primary School

Self-Evaluation Document

Context

- Single-form entry primary school with 30-place full-time nursery class
- Community School – London Borough of Tower Hamlets, and member of Tower Hamlets Education Partnership
- Very high indicators of social deprivation – overwhelming majority of families live in public housing, high pupil premium (62%)
- High levels of English as an Additional Language – key issue is that many pupils have limited exposure to strong language models outside of school. Significant numbers of children do not experience rich vocabulary or more complex language structures in either English or a home language outside of school.
- School is popular and well-established within the small community of the Barkantine Estate, which it was built to serve 50 years ago. The school is oversubscribed in almost all year groups.
- School has stable and experienced staff. Headteacher in post for 6+ years, some senior leaders have worked in the school for much longer. Currently no NQTs.
- Pupil demographic mirrors Tower Hamlets as a whole – pupils are predominantly Muslim, with about 70% of Bangladeshi ethnicity.

Current Challenges

- i) New deputy took up post in September 2017 (with a term's handover from a long-serving deputy who retires in December 2017).
- ii) Increasing numbers of pupils subject to child protection plans/care orders;
- iii) Building project and playground development works funded by the school itself continue in the autumn term 2017.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is effective.

Strengths

- Case studies evidence school to have been proactive in pursuing complex and serious safeguarding concerns even where these concerns did not meet immediate thresholds of other agencies (e.g. DBS, Children's Social Care). (**Evidence:** confidential files)
- Headteacher has been primary representative on the LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board) since Sep 2015. (**Evidence:** written reports to Tower Hamlets Heads' Consultative Meetings)
- School has hosted meetings between primary headteachers and Children's Social Care to examine strategic concerns at local authority level.

Challenges

- New deputy head is new to the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Responses

- Head is also trained and experienced as DSL – transition back-up.

- Joint training for head and deputy booked for October 2017.
- Post training, new deputy will carry out a school Safeguarding Audit, Nov 2017.

Effectiveness of Leadership and Management

The leadership and management of the school are good.

Strengths

- The leadership's vision is articulated clearly (for kindness; inclusion; and expectations of strong achievement regardless of children's starting points or barriers to learning). (**Evidence:** [Website](#); [newsletters](#); notes of InSET and staff meetings; governors' minutes; [Self Evaluation Form - SEF](#) - and [School Improvement plan](#))
- High expectations for behaviour are made clear to all stakeholders (not just children). (**Evidence:** Behaviour policy; [newsletters](#); training files). Leadership is reflective about how to improve behaviour, even when it is already good. (**Evidence:** [School Improvement Plan](#), see also **Responses to Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare** below.)
- Self-evaluation of the school is accurate, and is shared honestly by the headteacher with governors and staff. (**Evidence:** [Self Evaluation Form](#); [School Improvement Plan](#); governors' minutes). Development planning responds to immediate triggers (changes in data) but also takes a 'long view' – e.g. building development works; meaningful assessment systems responding to national changes. (**Evidence:** Governors' minutes)
- Curriculum remains a real strength of the school, and the leadership continues to resist pressures to narrow the curriculum. We believe that a broad and engaging curriculum supports achievement. (**Evidence:** [topic-based curriculum planning](#); music provision; Power of Reading approach to using high-quality texts; annual whole-school topic; PE provision (see *below*); extensive programme of trips to support learning (including [two residentials](#), one in [France](#)); topics that build on/reflect children's own knowledge and experiences (country studies; Year 6 Islamic Civilization topic; Black History Week).
- Broad range of after school clubs offered at no charge, including professional sports coaching (**Evidence:** Extended school co-ordinator files); popular breakfast club (from 7.30 daily) at nominal cost (20p) also includes art/craft and sporting activities – strong take-up.) The rationale for this expenditure is to give our pupils access to activities they would not otherwise experience.
- Use of PE and sports premium is reviewed at least annually to maximise the impact of funding. (**Evidence:** Focus Table Tennis; switch to Badu sports for some coaching; new playtime sports support; amended swimming provision for Year 3 & 4, including intensive swimming programme for autumn 2017)
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain – community cohesion is a strength of the school. Key national events and Christian religious festivals are celebrated by all pupils (no withdrawals) (**Evidence:** [website](#)). Muslim and other festivals that reflect both school and national diversity are celebrated meaningfully (**Evidence:** parental feedback); RE teaching and assemblies draw links and comparisons between religious beliefs and emphasise underlying shared ethics. School council is active and leads on key issues (anti-bullying). Staff and governing bodies reflect diversity of local community.
- Well-established cycle for monitoring teaching and learning, and continued focus on the school's 'core business'. (**Evidence:** Monitoring files; [School Improvement Plans](#);

SMT minutes; assessment files.) School Improvement Plans reported to governors termly – Curriculum Committee as plans always have teaching and learning at their core.

- School works closely with Isle of Dogs cluster to sustain quality of teaching and respond to curriculum change/national developments. Head has chaired cluster for three of last four years. See also below, **Responses**
- Performance management of staff balances whole-school improvement targets with targets that respond to individual needs. Support staff performance targets introduced in 16-17, with amendments to system for 17-18. (**Evidence:** [School improvement plan](#)).
- Good range of initiatives to develop middle leaders: Cluster moderation leads; LBTH training approach with middle leadership opportunities (**Evidence:** Guided Reading; [Nrich](#)); thoughtful class teaching placements to ensure cross-phase experience for younger middle and senior leaders.
- Effective plan for senior leadership succession planning: new deputy works alongside retiring deputy for autumn term 2017; shared head/new deputy training for Designated Safeguarding Lead; Senco qualification training for new deputy (start spring 18)
- Size of cohorts and nature of the school mean that some groups have limited statistical significance – including some prior attainment groups. The school's key groups are: SEN (Special Educational Needs); pupil premium eligible; Bangladeshi ethnicity; EAL (English as an Additional Language). Head's report on Standards and Achievement reports on these and other groups as appropriate (**Evidence:** Governor's files). Resources are allocated to support key groups who may be vulnerable to underachievement. (**Evidence:** Spoken language and communication teacher; Bengali-speaking parent support/home school liaison workers).
- Assessment and tracking systems are designed to ensure that progress of **all** pupils can be monitored, regardless of starting points (above or below) in relation to national curriculum expected levels. (**Evidence:** Assessment files). Progress monitoring used to identify additional need and allocate resources. (**Evidence:** SEN matrix; progress monitoring minutes, EAL files). Clear matrix of SEN support.
- Parental engagement workers well established and approachable; regular programme of parent workshops and courses; (**Evidence:** parent support worker files); annual course for parents who wish to volunteer in school; regular opportunities (formal and informal) for parents to come into school and share children's work (**Evidence:** [class assemblies](#); [special assemblies](#); website; [newsletters](#)); active Parents and Friends Association; new building project includes a new parents' room; annual written school reports are presented in a way that gives information meaningfully and accessibly.
- School funding is managed carefully. (**Evidence:** termly written reports to governors; minutes of termly finance meetings). Additional funding is directed to additional teaching/learning resources, e.g. dyslexia-specialist SEN reading teacher; reading recovery teacher; additional support teachers who 'boost' target pupils; TAs with allocated intervention roles. Pupil premium children are tracked and performance compared with other groups.
- Governance is strong. Good governor attendance at meetings and other school events. Governors undertake training and attend Governor briefing sessions from LBTH. Governors offer support to the school outside of meetings if necessary. (**Evidence:** Governor minutes).

- Curriculum promotes equality and respect for diversity. (**Evidence:** Choice of topics – e.g. focus on achievements of famous women in history). RE and PSHE teaching has strong focus on equality and respect. School ‘special events’ also promote sharing of different cultural and religious experiences (**Evidence:** [Eid](#) & Chinese New Year celebrations; Black History Week.) Discriminatory behaviour is challenged and addressed (**Evidence:** behaviour case studies; Deputy Head monitoring files).
- Safeguarding is effective (see section above, ‘Safeguarding’).
- School is proactive in addressing radicalisation and extremism in all forms. Staff and governors trained in LBTH ‘Prevent’ agenda. Parent workshops discuss radicalisation and extremism, and raise parental awareness of possible outside influences on children. Curriculum promotes understanding of the diversity of different cultures **and** diversity within cultures – a key feature of the Islamic Civilization Year 6 topic. Assemblies respond to difficult issues if necessary (e.g. terrorist attacks). Senior leaders work closely with local community leaders (e.g. local mosques) to respond to extremism.
- Staff are trained to be aware of signs of abuse or sexualised behaviour in children (see section above, ‘Safeguarding’). Sex and relationships education in Years 5 & 6 refers to inappropriate use of new media for sexualised content – links with E-safety. Head sat recently on LSCB working party on children’s inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Current Challenges

- Reduced capacity of local authority to give school improvement support
- New co-opt governor appointment for autumn 2017 to fill vacancy.
- Deputy head retirement

Responses

- School is building internal leadership capacity. (**Evidence:** [School Improvement Plan](#); training)
- THEP – Tower Hamlets Education Partnership. School is a founder member.
- Closer working with Isle of Dogs cluster of schools, particularly on work with a teaching and learning focus contained in 17-18 strategic plan. (**Evidence:** Cluster moderation & year group meetings; reading research project for 17-18; anti-bullying project)
- New style training from Local Authority/THEP has a clearer focus on core teaching and learning issues. Middle leaders are trained to cascade new strategies/initiatives/good practice into their schools. (Guided reading; [NRich maths](#))
- Changes in use of Sports Premium funding: Badu Sports engaged for Sep 17; intensive swimming programme in Year 4.
- See also section below on **Teaching, Learning and Assessment** for detailed responses to current needs.
- A Parent Voice programme planned for Autumn 2017 to particularly look at parental responses to key issues, including behaviour issues.

Quality of Teaching Learning and Assessment

Teaching, Learning and Assessment are good.

Strengths

- Scrutiny of work shows appropriate levels of work, good differentiation within year groups and good progress.
- Lesson observations evidence consistently strong teaching in all classes, with some examples of outstanding teaching.
- Improvements made in the teaching of maths in 2015 – 2017 mean that children are now working more closely in line with the expectations of the new curriculum.
- There are regular reviews of pupil progress. These reviews feed into the allocation of additional support and resources.
- Pupils consistently report that lessons are engaging and exciting. (**Evidence:** Pupil voice; school reports)
- The school's assessment systems for reading, writing and maths are the results of collaborate work by teachers during 2015 – 2017, giving staff a strong sense of ownership and understanding of the assessment systems being used. (**Evidence:** Assessment files)
- The schools' assessment systems facilitate assessment for learning as well as feeding into pupil tracking. Assessments lead directly to 'next steps' learning'. (**Evidence:** Planning files; lesson observations.

Current Challenges

- The school has responded to changes in the national assessment system over the past two years by developing its own assessment systems which aim to:
 - tie in closely with the new (higher) expectations of the national curriculum; yet still
 - allow for a numerical progress measure for each pupil, so that we can identify the pace of progress that individual children are making in reading, writing and maths.

The school is pleased with the impact of the assessment system in that it **does** still allow us to track rates of progress for pupils, regardless of their starting points, but some aspects of the system remain problematical – particularly for writing, where the numbers allocated for different points in the assessment 'journey' do not properly reflect how far on track children are to achieve 'expected' levels at Year 6. Our current tracking system does not accurately reflect the quality of the work we are seeing in books.

- Ensuring consistency of teacher judgements across the school using the new assessment frameworks – this has been particularly challenging for maths, where the curriculum includes so many different skills and pieces of understanding.
- Recently announced changes to national assessment system.

Responses

- Ongoing assessment of the review system – both in the light of our own experiences, and of national changes.
- Incorporating optional NFER tests 2 x annually into the progress tracking of children in Years 3, 4 and 5.
- Termly 'best writing' sample books to monitor progress in writing across time (not just a single year).

- ‘Fine-level’ maths assessment tests to support manageable teacher assessment – particularly to help address the issue of how far a piece of learning has been embedded.

Personal Development, Welfare and Behaviour

Pupils’ personal development, welfare and behaviour are all good.

Strengths

- Formal and informal lesson observations evidence good learning behaviours across all phases.
- Established Behaviour Policy, clear system for recording and monitoring behaviour (**Evidence:** incident books, Think About Behaviour Sheets)
- Successful behaviour management strategies for pupils who demonstrate challenging behaviour in class (**Evidence:** case studies)
- Pupils know school Golden Rules and use them to reflect on behaviour.
- Clear system for parents to express and escalate concerns.
- Annual focus on bullying during anti-bullying week (**Evidence:** [website](#))
- Annual focus on e-safety during an e-safety week (**Evidence:** display, planning)
- Visitors (and adults encountered outside school during trips) comment positively on courtesy and behaviour of pupils.
- No exclusions (temporary or permanent) for past six years
- Outside agencies (e.g. police, children’s social care, secondary colleagues) are involved in any serious cases of poor behaviour (**Evidence:** case histories).
- Attendance in line with Tower Hamlets average for three out of past four years (96%). Best attendance of all primary schools in Isle of Dogs cluster. Good improvement in 16-17 in Reception attendance ranking us 7th in the borough. Low % of persistent absentees (3.5%) in July 17, giving us 6th lowest proportion of persistent absentees in borough. (**Evidence:** Annual Attendance Report)
- Well-established two-tier system for monitoring attendance; parent support worker daily works closely with borough attendance and welfare advisor (AWA) fortnightly. Daily punctuality monitoring and daily attendance phone calls. Close senior leadership oversight. Detailed record keeping enables focus on early intervention. Fines issued if necessary. (**Evidence:** attendance files)

Challenges

- Although playtime behaviour is generally good, it has not been as good as behaviour in class.
- Ongoing need for dialogue with parents about school behaviour management strategies.

Responses

- School improvement plan focus: improved playground provision; positive behaviour management at playtime; simplified system for addressing and recording lapses (using Golden Rules consistently in playground).
- Parent Voice programme for autumn and spring terms 2017-18 (Tower Hamlets Parent Support Service involvement). Focus on sharing/developing parental understanding of/involvement in behaviour management.

Outcomes for Pupils

Outcomes for pupils are good.

NB This section gives an overview of outcomes. Detailed information about groups is not published on the school's website due to the small numbers involved in some groups; it is contained in the Head's Report to Governors on Standards and Achievement.

Strengths

- Attainment in Year 6 is very closely in line with national mean averages of children meeting expected levels - in spite of low levels of attainment on entry to the school and the big jump in % achieving expected levels nationally in 2017.
- Attainment in maths and SPAG at Year 6 remains slightly higher than national averages.
- Reading and SPAG attainment at higher level in Year 6 has risen from 2016 to 2017, though remains slightly lower than national averages.
- Progress at Year 6 in 2016 was strong in all subjects, though not statistically significantly so. In 2017 it was less strong, but still slightly higher than the national average.
- Attainment at Year 2 in Reading, Writing and Maths (and all three combined) all rose from 2016 to 2017, though the breakdown of who attained what meant the proportion of pupils attaining expected level in all three subjects combined was only 50%.
- Attainment in Year 1 phonics is in line with (slightly better than) national averages.
- Attainment of a Good Level of Development at end Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – Year R – improved from 2016 to 2017.

Challenges

- Expected attainment levels in reading and writing fell from 2016 to 2017, although they remain in line with national averages.
- Attainment at higher level in Year 6
- Attainment at Year 2 remains somewhat lower than national averages in reading, writing and maths (though not, we believe, statistically significantly so).
- Proportion of children attaining a good level of development at EYFS remains below national average.

Responses

- School Improvement Plan for developing teaching and learning in reading across the entire school.
- Continued focus on spoken language – to address the challenge of children being able to learn phonics, but struggling with the transition to a fuller comprehension of the meaning of texts.
- Moderation at Key Stage 1 to verify that school assessment is accurate.

Issues from Previous Ofsted Inspection

- Phonics teaching in EYFS has improved (**Evidence:** lesson observations; consistently improved attainment in phonics at end Year 1).
- Challenge for most able pupils was addressed in 2014 and 15 by additional teaching and curriculum stretch for the most able, which was reflected in improved attainment at old Level 6. The new curriculum – particularly in writing and maths –

has embedded this stretch for able children, although in 2016 and 2017 resources have inevitably been focused primarily on supporting middle achievers to reach the more difficult 'expected' level. There has been an improvement in the proportion of children attaining higher level in 2017 (particularly in Reading and SPAG), but the school's attainment results at higher level remain less well aligned to national averages than for those reaching expected level.

- Challenge for able pupils has also been addressed by continuing to offer high-quality teaching for the broader curriculum:
 - instrumental teaching has been extended to include clarinets and keyboards;
 - there has been a year-on-year review of the effectiveness of how we spend the sports premium, leading to improvements in provision for children who are able in PE;
 - in 2017-18 Year 6 French teaching is being differentiated.