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Mrs D Rogers
Headteacher
Newlands School
Waverley Road
Middleton
Manchester
M24 6JG

Dear Mrs Rogers

Ofsted inspections of schools under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Following my visit to your school on 3 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you and your staff gave during the inspection and for the information you made available before and during my visit.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. Discussions were held with you, four parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. I attended an assembly, visited nine teaching sessions and scrutinised documents relating to action taken since the school's last inspection in February 2012, school improvement, pupils' progress, curriculum planning and safeguarding.

Achievement of pupils at the school

As judged in the last inspection, most pupils make good personal progress although, for some, progress over a school year is very small. 'My child has come on really well' and 'improving all the time' were typical views from parents expressed at parents' evening the day before the inspection and during the inspection. Parents were particularly pleased with the progress in their children's communication skills; the use of signing, the development of speech and having friends at school had

often accompanied a reduction in challenging behaviour. Compared with 2011/12, a higher proportion of pupils have made at least the expected rate of progress in English, mathematics and science. The school is aware that achievement in mathematics is not as strong as it could be, but an increased emphasis on practical experiences and problem solving is beginning to reap benefits. A group of older boys, for example, tackled word problems successfully and, with some reassuring, yet challenging, prompts from adults, could explain the strategy they used.

The quality of teaching in the school

Teaching is generally good. Although there are some elements of outstanding practice, there are also some inconsistencies. A key strength of the teaching is the positive, warm interaction between adults and pupils. All staff are quick to see and to take action when a pupil loses concentration, is unsure of what to do or is physically uncomfortable. Staff work very well together to ensure that every pupil plays as full a part in each session as possible. For instance, during the inspection, the use of hoists and different chairs or frames enabled pupils with mobility problems to take part in floor and table activities indoors and out. Teaching assistants play a key role in sustaining pupils' engagement and concentration, sometimes using light touch on the hand to gain attention, signs and cards to remind individuals of expected behaviour and, like the teachers, praising pupils for 'good listening' or 'good sitting'. Many are also highly skilled in keeping up a running conversation, giving a pupil simple choices, repeating key words, asking questions and modelling possible answers. As a result, pupils are kept engaged and involved in lessons. For example, Key Stage 2 pupils enjoyed using either hands, brushes or sponges to pattern the papers to be used for popcorn cones in the next day's 'visit' to Blackpool and others enjoyed the sensation of water on their feet or sand in their hands.

Teachers' planning gives details of the intended content and sequence of experiences. Attractive booklets for families, based on the current topic, give a range of activities to carry out at home. However, lesson plans often give less on exactly what groups and individual pupils are to learn, such as the key words and phrases teachers wish pupils to use, the skill to be rehearsed or the new element to be acquired. As a result, staff miss chances to home in on specific aspects and to tune their oral and written comments to how well pupils have learnt them. Similarly, there is scope to engage all pupils in assessing for themselves how they are doing. These aspects were also identified as areas for improvement in the last inspection.

Behaviour and safety of pupils at the school

As judged in the inspection in 2012, behaviour overall is outstanding. Pupils are very well supervised but also given freedom to make their own choices. Outdoors, pupils used scooters, trikes and prams safely, moving around others sensibly. They know the rules and routines. During this visit, there were no incidents of unacceptable behaviour; several pupils' high excitement about the next day's pretend train journey

did not detract from a willingness to participate in sessions. In an assembly, pupils performed confidently in front of an exemplary audience; pupils and staff listened carefully, looked with interest at costumes, passports and project books, and offered answers to questions about the countries represented. The encouragement of staff helped those pupils in role to remember how to say hello in their represented country and unscripted comments added to the overall celebratory atmosphere.

In a small group session, questions from two puppets prompted pupils to talk about how they knew how others might be feeling and what they could do to help themselves if they felt lonely. Parents commented on how their children really enjoy school. Some highlighted the 'love, care and support' from the staff, aspects very evident during this inspection.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The overall quality is good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher share a clear vision for the school. To give all pupils the very best in line with their needs, they are leading and working with staff to develop their practice, to build on their ideas and to strengthen collaboration with the adjacent mainstream primary school. Much has been done to agree ways of working, good examples being the management of teachers' performance, the teaching of mathematics and the assessment of pupils' achievement. The headteacher has clarified her expectations of those staff with additional responsibilities; key management skills are developing, especially in relation to improving the quality of provision across the curriculum. However, as judged in the inspection in 2012, such actions are not linked explicitly enough in plans to measure the expected impact on pupils' personal and educational development, thus making it difficult to gauge the success of decisions and actions taken.

Safeguarding and pupils' welfare are high priorities and reflected fully in everyday practice. Parents said they feel welcome in the school and able to raise any issue concerning their children's progress, health and well-being. Relevant policies are regularly updated and ratified by the governing body, and staff undertake regular training. Required records and logs are up to date. Some minor inconsistencies in documentation were shared with the headteacher, Chair of the Governing Body and the representative from the local authority.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Rochdale and as below. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sonja Øyen
Her Majesty's Inspector