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Mr John d'Abbro
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr d'Abbro

Short inspection of The New Rush Hall School

Following my visit to the school on 9 November 2016 with Susan Cox, 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 outstanding in December 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with the previous head of school, you have instilled a culture of care and high expectations that everyone shares. This is evident in every aspect of the school's work. Staff model the behaviours and social skills that they wish pupils to acquire. They support each other and ensure that the agreed procedures for dealing with incidents of challenging behaviour are applied in a consistent manner. This ensures that teachers are able to teach without disruption and pupils who are new to the school understand what is expected of them and settle quickly.

Staff and parents recognise that the school has benefited from a sustained period of highly effective leadership. You contribute to numerous national and local partnerships to share your expertise and that of your staff. You successfully balance your role as a national leader of education with your responsibilities as executive headteacher for the wider New Rush Hall group. This year, following the partial retirement of the head of school, you have taken on further responsibilities, while you recruit her replacement. She has agreed to remain as a part-time associate headteacher to help you fulfil some of your strategic responsibilities. Together, you are maintaining standards across the school while governors recruit new senior leaders and plan for the long-term future of the school.

Leaders and governors have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They check to see that improvements make a difference to the outcomes of pupils and constantly evaluate how things could be even better. Regular reviews of the school's work are carried out using leaders from other schools and the school improvement officer from the local authority. Governors use reports from the reviews to hold leaders strongly to account and agree where further work is necessary. For example, the roles of middle leaders are being developed to create additional leadership capacity and prepare new leaders for the next steps in their careers.

The only area for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection has been fully addressed. Teaching standards across the school have been maintained and you have invested in technologies that support the different needs of pupils and allow them to engage with their learning positively.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures take account of the latest guidance and the school's safeguarding policy reflects this. All of the required checks are completed before staff take up their appointments and careful records are kept to demonstrate this. Staff receive safeguarding updates and training regularly throughout the year. Recent updates have included information on the 'Prevent' duty, female genital mutilation and online safety. Designated officers for child protection and children looked after carry out their responsibilities effectively and work closely with other professionals and carers to ensure that pupils get the support they need. Staff know how to report any concerns that they may have and understand the needs of their pupils well. Important information is shared on a daily basis to ensure that appropriate support is arranged and everyone is kept safe.

Parents, staff and pupils express few concerns about bullying or antisocial behaviours. Their views are supported by the low number of serious behaviour, bullying or racist incidents that are recorded. When incidents do occur, they are carefully evaluated to agree additional support and assess potential risks.

The school building and outdoor areas are attractive and well maintained. There is no litter or graffiti because pupils treat their surroundings with respect. Systems for entering and moving around the site are safely managed and usually complied with. Incidents that require staff to physically intervene are methodically recorded and evaluated to ensure that their actions have been appropriate and proportionate. Staff are skilled in de-escalation strategies and restraints are avoided whenever possible. Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and learn how to keep themselves safe both in and outside of school.

Inspection findings

- Governors are taking appropriate actions to recruit new senior leaders and fill the existing vacancies on the governing body. They are aware that the

temporary arrangements currently in place are not sustainable in the longer term. Some administrative jobs are not being completed in good time. For example, leaders have audited the content of the school's website and have correctly identified that some key information is missing but have still to rectify this.

- Systems for monitoring and recording admissions and attendance are highly effective. Working alongside attendance officers from the local authority, managers ensure that any non-attendance is immediately challenged and followed up. Consequently, many pupils have better rates of attendance than their peers in mainstream schools.
- The school has a very clear strategy concerning the use of temporary exclusions. There is zero tolerance for physical assaults on other pupils or staff. This has resulted in exclusion rates remaining high compared to other schools. However, some pupils attend more frequently and engage with their learning more positively following a period of exclusion. They understand that behaviours that cause harm to others are unacceptable and will always be sanctioned. Consequently, the number of temporary exclusions is reducing and permanent exclusions hardly ever occur.
- Pupils are carefully assessed on entry to the school and an individual learning plan for them agreed. Many pupils start to make rapid progress from their starting points because of the effective support and encouragement they receive. Barriers to learning are overcome as a result of effective mentoring that encourages pupils to accept increasing responsibility for their own behaviours.
- Many pupils make exceptional progress from their starting points across all subjects and key stages. This is because teachers know what gaps in understanding need to be filled and plan learning activities pitched at the correct level. All pupils, including those who are most-able, are suitably challenged and supported to make up for any lost time.
- Pupils receive one-to-one support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. As their reading improves they become more confident learners. Significant gaps in pupils' mathematical understanding start to close as opportunities to use their skills in meaningful ways are regularly provided.
- Older pupils receive independent information, advice and guidance that are very comprehensive and allow them to consider their next steps. A programme of speakers, visits and trips help to raise aspirations and improve awareness of the opportunities available. This year the school has focused on improving public speaking to help pupils be more confident when they are interviewed. Nearly all secondary pupils attend a trip to Barcelona for a week in the summer term to help them use the language skills they have learnt and experience life in another country. Many go on to complete their chosen college courses because they have acquired the skills that they need to be successful.
- Pupils are provided with excellent support to become confident and happy learners. They are provided with healthy breakfasts and lunches and are encouraged to make good use of the sports facilities to improve their personal fitness. At lunchtime they sit down to talk and eat with other pupils and staff. Pupils appreciate the care and support provided by staff at the school. Positive, respectful relationships between staff and pupils are the norm.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- information provided on the school's website covers all of the required areas relating to equalities and special educational needs and/or disabilities
- succession plans are implemented as soon as possible to allow the legacy of high standards embedded by the school's current leaders to continue.

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

Lesley Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection:

- how the recruitment and retention of key post holders, including those responsible for leadership and management, is being addressed
- how technologies are used to support teaching, learning and assessment and promote pupils' engagement
- how leaders manage attendance and admissions systems and their use of temporary exclusions
- to establish if pupils continue to achieve outstanding outcomes from their different starting points across all subjects and age groups
- how policies are reviewed and the website updated to reflect the latest guidance and provide parents with the information that they need.

Inspectors carried out the following activities to explore these areas during the inspection:

- meetings were held with the executive headteacher and other senior leaders, the life skills teacher, the psychotherapist, the education, health and care plan coordinator, middle leaders responsible for literacy and numeracy support and assessment and with the school improvement partner and attendance officer from the local authority
- they conducted a series of short visits to classrooms to look at learning across all key stages, accompanied by senior leaders
- they spoke to pupils about their work, listened to them read and held informal conversations with them during lunch time
- they considered the 26 staff questionnaires, nine responses to Ofsted's online

Parent View questionnaire, 16 pupil surveys and the results of the school's own parental and learner surveys

- they scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, pupils' assessment information, admissions and attendance logs and safeguarding records
- they checked the school's website.