

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



27 March 2017

Ms Nuala Finegan
Headteacher
Rodney House School
Albert Grove
Longsight
Manchester
Greater Manchester
M12 4WF

Dear Ms Finegan

Short inspection of Rodney House School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2017 with Her Majesty's Inspector Doreen Davenport, 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

Your leadership has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. With the support of other leaders and governors, you have steered the school successfully through a number of changes, not least the recent relocation to a single-site provision. There is a wonderfully calm atmosphere at the school because your staff are sensitive and knowledgeable about the needs of pupils. They go about their work with great professionalism and skill. Pupils thrive and many make outstanding progress in each area of development from their starting points.

Your self-evaluation of the school's work is accurate and based securely upon evidence. Since the last inspection, the development plan is clearly set out so that governors can check and measure the success of agreed actions, for example how a sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has direct links to improving pupil progress. You are clear that the key priority is to ensure that the curriculum can be further developed to incorporate the needs of older pupils.

A wide range of learning opportunities are provided for pupils so that they can develop their speech and communication, their social skills and their physical skills, as well as the more formal skills of reading, writing and number. Staff ensure that the 'pupil voice' is heard. Pupils' likes and dislikes are taken seriously to inform

individual education plans and when deciding which play equipment will be purchased for outdoor play.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust, understood and followed by all relevant personnel, including visitors to the school. Governors review related policies annually, but also when there are updates in national advice, guidance or legislation.

We noted detailed risk assessment guidance throughout the site, including for caretaking and cleaning staff. Documentation is thorough, detailed and well maintained. Staff we spoke with said that there is a comprehensive induction pack for new staff, which includes the school's safeguarding policy. They receive updated training in safeguarding and this has raised their awareness about possible safeguarding or child protection issues. Staff and governors are vigilant about safety on the internet and there are effective online safety procedures.

Inspection findings

- Senior staff link their lesson observation findings to the performance management of teachers, with strong reference to the importance of the progress pupils make from their starting points. This is an improvement from the last inspection report.
- Feedback provided by leaders enables teachers to reflect in depth about their class lessons and to focus upon their strengths and weaknesses. This is a particular strength of the leadership of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders make use of very effective tracking systems with teachers, to monitor pupils' progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' learning records are very well maintained to show pupils' progress over time, supplemented by staff and parental comments, alongside photographic evidence.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to be outstanding. Classrooms are calm and inclusive. Staff adhere exceptionally well to the agreed school policy for teaching, learning and assessment. Individual learning plans provide very precise information about what pupils can or cannot do across different areas of learning. Teachers make highly effective use of this information to plan their lessons – especially in regard to their deployment of teaching support staff and the use of visual, practical, digital and auditory aids. Staff manage pupils' behaviour in class and around school with the utmost sensitivity and care, especially when pupils are upset.
- School records demonstrate that most pupils make good or better progress from their starting points. This was less the case for speech and communication. However, leaders have recognised this and have used pupil premium funding with great effect to develop staff capacity to promote pupils' speech and

communication skills through targeted teaching and support. The school's speech therapist has been instrumental in providing training for staff. As a result, most pupils make good or better progress in their speech and communication from their starting points.

- There has been progress in pupils' behaviour (linked to speech and communication) so that they engage better in learning and social situations. Sports premium funding has been used very effectively to improve pupils' gross motor skills, for example through the purchase of an outdoor trampoline and soft-play resources.
- The most able pupils read aloud in class, reading directly from a presented text. They enjoy acting out the voices of different characters. Teachers encourage pupils to read in different subjects, for example in food technology. Lower-attaining pupils develop an enjoyment of handling and looking at their favourite books. Pupils show an ability to sound out letters and blends of letters when reading new words.
- The school's outreach work with other early years providers in the city is highly regarded because of the positive impact that early help and support provides. Strong partnerships have been established between the speech therapist and parents. Also, a school nurse is employed full-time at the school. She provides training for staff in the safe handling of medicines in school. She contributes effectively to child protection meetings and is a reassuring presence for parents. Parents say that the school is 'fantastic' and that there is 'great parental engagement'. Staff are 'caring and supportive' and pupils are 'thriving'.
- There are termly meetings organised by senior leaders with all relevant health professionals to discuss the developmental needs of each pupil. As a result, there are very clear education, health and care plans which are used to great effect by teachers and support staff to inform classroom planning that takes great account of the individual needs of pupils.
- There is a named governor for each class. Senior staff enable governors to gain an insight into the impact of teaching and support on pupil progress and outcomes. Minutes of meetings demonstrate that governors ask challenging questions, for example why some pupils are on part-time timetables or why pupils are grouped in mixed ages.
- Governors are very knowledgeable about the use and impact of pupil premium and sports premium funding. They know that pupil premium funding benefits disadvantaged pupils who have difficulties in speech and communication.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop the curriculum to meet the needs of older pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Jon Ashley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the team met with you and your deputy headteacher. A meeting was held with the chair of governors and two local authority representatives. A telephone conversation was held with one parent. Inspectors spoke to parents on site, as well as the school nurse and the speech therapist. Inspectors conducted joint lesson observations with you and your deputy headteacher. They looked at pupils' learning journals and classroom displays. They considered a range of documentation, including the school's review of its strengths and areas to develop, the school development plan and information about pupils' ability levels and progress. Inspectors looked at documentation relating to safeguarding, including safe recruitment of staff and risk assessments. They considered staff and parent questionnaire information from the online questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.