

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Sheila Talwar  
Principal  
St Rose's Special School  
Stratford Lawn  
Stroud  
Gloucestershire  
GL5 4AP

Dear Mrs Talwar

### **Short inspection of St Rose's Special School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 2017 with Ofsted Inspector, Jen Edwards, 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 April 2014.

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

You work in an open, collegiate way with leaders and the wider staff team, and the leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your passion, enthusiasm and energy to ensure that the pupils receive the best quality of care and education are palpable. Since being appointed as the substantive principal in October 2016, you have ensured that the school continues to improve. You and your leadership team work effortlessly together. You share the same vision and aspirations for outstanding provision for each and every pupil. Staff clearly understand the needs of the pupils, all of whom have varied and significant complex needs.

The dedication of your team was summed up eloquently in the following statement by a parent: 'The school and staff have been fantastic at getting to grips with the complex needs of our child. We find the collaboration between teaching staff and therapists extremely effective. This enables a holistic approach to our child's education.' Consequently, pupils who attend your school receive high-quality teaching and therapy, achieve well and make good progress.

One of the improvement points arising from the previous inspection was to ensure that the school accessed additional government funding for identified pupils. You have done this with positive outcomes. For example, funding allocated for disadvantaged pupils is carefully spent to provide these pupils with the personalised

support to enable them to make good progress. As a result, there is no discernible difference between the progress that disadvantaged pupils make and that of their peers. In addition, you were asked to increase the amount of outstanding teaching and further raise pupils' achievement. Inspection evidence demonstrates that pupils receive high-quality teaching by skilled staff who are acutely aware of the specific learning needs of each pupil. This ensures that they make good progress from often extremely low starting points.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive and greatly appreciate the quality of care and education that their children receive. 'The care my child receives is outstanding and I feel she is genuinely cared for and nurtured by professional staff'; 'St Rose's goes above and beyond. They are excellent in every respect'; and 'This school is like a big family. I would recommend this school to anyone', are typical of the comments made to the inspectors. Indeed, all parents who responded to the online survey or spoke to inspectors would recommend the school.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to consider during the day. These included: how the school ensures that pupils are safe; the effectiveness of leaders in ensuring that pupils receive a high-quality standard of education and care; how teaching promotes good learning; the effectiveness of the curriculum and therapeutic provision in supporting pupils' academic and social development; and how effective the school is in preparing pupils for their future destinations. These key lines of enquiry are considered below under 'safeguarding' and 'inspection findings'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The nature of your school means that all pupils are vulnerable in a variety of ways. You ensure that the safety and well-being of every pupil lie at the heart of all that the school does. As a result, there is a strong culture of safeguarding and recognition that it is everybody's responsibility. Consequently, staff, whatever their role, fully understand the need to be vigilant at all times.

Leaders ensure that they provide an environment where pupils are safe and secure. Leaders have implemented clear and well-understood procedures so that adults know how to refer concerns within school and to outside agencies. Leaders carefully monitor pupils and are diligent in following up any concerns. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality.

Staff receive timely and appropriate training on keeping pupils safe. This provides them with the knowledge and skills to identify concerns and take rapid action with confidence. Controversial issues are not avoided. For example, staff have undertaken training on child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation.

Leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of the importance of recruiting safely. Records of checks on staff are comprehensive and accurate. Risk assessments are in place for activities undertaken and for individual pupils. Leaders are diligent in making sure that these remain fit for purpose.

The supportiveness of relationships between staff and pupils is unmistakable. Staff very quickly form strong and trusting relationships with pupils. Consequently, pupils are happy and visibly enjoy their time in school. This is clearly reflected in their regular attendance.

Parents who spoke to inspectors or completed the online survey are unanimous that their children are happy, safe and well looked after at school. 'A really loving school that achieves great things with the children through their expertise and care', and 'The staff at this school are so experienced and confident and I totally trust them', are just two examples of the positive comments received.

### **Inspection findings**

- You are an inspiring leader. You have high expectations of yourself and your staff to deliver a high-quality education tailored to the needs of each individual pupil. You have quickly and seamlessly made the transition to your role as principal and have the respect of the school community. You are ably supported by a skilled leadership team that shares your high aspirations for the school and to drive forward improvements. Therefore, the capacity of the school to improve further is strong.
- Self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. However, while development plans identify actions to be taken, they lack precision in how such actions are going to improve pupils' academic progress.
- Governors and trustees work closely with leaders to ensure that the individual needs of pupils are well met. They have a good range of skills and expertise and provide strong support and challenge to leaders. There is no complacency; governors are aware that they need to focus on the achievement and progress of pupils further to secure the best possible outcomes for them. This they are tackling with rigour. Training opportunities for governors are carefully planned to keep them up to date with current educational thinking and provide them with the expertise to effectively fulfil their roles and responsibilities.
- You and your senior leaders carefully track the learning and progress of pupils. You undertake a wide range of monitoring activities, which include learning walks and checking on pupils' progress in their work. You provide high-quality staff development to ensure that staff further develop the knowledge, skills and understanding required to provide effective learning opportunities for pupils. For example, the school is currently working towards a national accreditation for supporting pupils with a diagnosis of autism. As a result of effective staff development, staff are highly skilled and the quality of teaching is good. This is securing good pupil progress.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge and careful checking of what pupils know, understand and can do allow them to plan learning activities which precisely meet pupils' needs. There is a strong focus on total communication. This was exemplified during the inspection. Pupils are successfully able to communicate their thinking using a wide range of communication tools, such as eye gaze technology and signing. Consequently, teachers are adept at gathering answers

to questions such as, 'Have you been abroad?' and 'Have you met a famous person?'

- You provide a curriculum which covers a wide range of subjects which excite and enthuse pupils. Music is a firm favourite with pupils. They are active participants in the school's orchestra and use technology to great effect to produce their own compositions.
- The core skills of reading, communication and mathematics are carefully threaded across all subjects and linked to developing pupils' real-life skills. For example, in one teaching session, pupils were working together to make a cake. Staff provided effective guidance to enable them to successfully weigh and mix the ingredients, place the mixture in the baking tin and wash up the utensils used. The expressions on the pupils' faces were of joy and excitement at what they had successfully achieved.
- Pupils are well known in the local community as you provide plentiful opportunities to visit a variety of places such as coffee shops and supermarkets. This provides them with the confidence to practise and increase their skills in communication. In addition, older pupils have access to a range of work experiences, which include horticulture and administration. Such activities prepare pupils well for their future education, training or employment.
- The integration of therapists working alongside teachers and teaching assistants in the classrooms is powerful. Together, they provide pupils with a holistic approach to care and education. Consequently, pupils receive a bespoke learning package and make strong progress in all aspects of their development.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- development plans state precisely how and when leaders will check that actions taken are improving outcomes for pupils
- governors check the quality of education that pupils receive and the progress they make with greater rigour so that pupils make the very best possible progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

We met with you and your senior leaders. Together, we talked about the improvements that have been made since the previous inspection. We observed the start of the day when pupils first arrive in school. We carried out learning walks through classes, accompanied by yourself or your vice principal. We also held discussions with three governors and held meetings with other members of staff. A meeting was held with the special educational needs monitoring school support officer from the local authority. A telephone conversation took place with a representative from a neighbouring local authority that places children in your school.

We reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence, including information on pupils' outcomes, the school's self-evaluation and records relating to the monitoring of behaviour, attendance and the safeguarding of pupils.

We spoke to parents during the day and took into account other correspondence received during the inspection. We considered the 15 responses to the online survey, 'Parent View', and nine free-text messages were also taken into account. We also considered nine responses to Ofsted's staff survey.