

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



31 January 2018

Mrs Leila Rothenburg
Headteacher
Rothwell Primary School
Carlton Lane
Rothwell
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS26 0DJ

Dear Mrs Rothenburg

Short inspection of Rothwell Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2018, 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You were appointed to the post of headteacher three years after the school was inspected. Following your appointment, you have forged a strong and effective partnership with your deputy headteacher. Governors and the local authority talk of your quiet inspiration because of the significant impact you are having on improving the school. Governors also have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school further. Together, you are steering school improvement effectively. You have worked successfully with the deputy headteacher to build a culture based on your school vision, 'Working together to REACH our potential'. To this end, pupils speak about being resilient, enjoying school, achieving well, collaborating and having a healthy lifestyle. This is captured by the REACH motto in school. Pupils, parents and staff are all highly positive about the school. You have kept pupils' safety, well-being and learning at the forefront of your thinking. Indeed, one parent, whose view was typical of many, wrote, 'My child feels safe, nurtured and above all happy.'

After astutely identifying weaknesses in the curriculum, you worked successfully with staff to produce a much more demanding diet for pupils. Pupils participate enthusiastically in a wide range of subjects and are curious learners. They are enthused and inspired by the rich and creative curriculum provided, which serves their needs well.

You have been proactive in tackling changes to staffing and the higher expectations you have established have improved outcomes especially in reading and mathematics. This process has undoubtedly brought challenges to leaders in many ways. As a new headteacher, you have managed these with quiet determination. This has meant that the drive for continuous improvement is present in your work, resulting in good and improving outcomes for all groups of pupils. For example, in 2017, lower rates of progress in pupils' writing at the end of key stage 1 led you and your leadership team to review the quality of teaching and provision in this aspect. High-quality training for staff has impacted positively on the quality of pupils' writing. Writing outcomes, as seen in pupils' work books, show that the improvements made by current pupils are good and continuing. You are working with teachers to ensure that pupils are provided with more opportunities to apply their writing skills across the curriculum so that there is greater challenge in writing, especially for the most able.

A further key feature of your work is in the identification and training of senior staff to increase the leadership capacity of the school. You have a core group of effective leaders in various roles who contribute effectively to the school's self-evaluation and review. They value the importance you and the governors place on staff development and how you are nurturing talent, which is strengthening the work of the school.

You have tackled effectively the recommendations from the previous inspection, ensuring that pupils are now taking greater responsibility and ownership for their learning. They receive guidance and support in evaluating their work, including through peer-to-peer activities. As a result, pupils check their understanding regularly and enter into useful dialogue with teachers. This is beneficial in enabling pupils to know what they have to do next to improve. In addition, you have responded well to the previous inspection issue about attendance and have made significant improvements in reducing the number of pupils whose attendance is a concern. Stronger and more robust systems are in place and this has impacted positively on all groups in the school.

However, as we discussed during my visit, there are areas for continued work and development. Most notably, a few disadvantaged boys still do not make as much progress in writing in key stage 1 as they are fully capable of. Furthermore, the quality of provision in the early years is not yet consistently good because there are missed opportunities to build on skills, and learning sometimes does not meet the needs of all children. We agreed that the outdoor area is also not as vibrant as the indoor learning space.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your attention to safeguarding is appropriately rigorous. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records, including the register of statutory checks on staff, are well maintained. Staff are fully vetted as suitable to work with children and they are trained well to be vigilant in keeping children safe. As a result, staff are mindful of

safeguarding and protecting children at all times. You have a strong safeguarding team, which ensures that there is the capacity to deal swiftly and effectively with safeguarding issues. The culture for safeguarding pupils is a strength of the school. To these ends, you have acted with tenacity to protect and support pupils, for example those at risk of missing from education.

Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how they may keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. This includes when working online. For example, a Year 5 pupil spoke confidently about how to withhold personal details and to report suspicious activity. All pupils speak positively about the school and confirm that adults listen to them.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection I focused on pupils' writing at key stage 1. I also wanted to consider the reasons behind the dip in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in writing at the end of key stage 1 in 2017. You and your leaders have accurately identified the specific reasons for the dip. Current information shows that writing has improved rapidly for all groups and the majority of pupils are at or above the expected standards in writing. You have provided high-quality training for your staff, which includes sharing the best practice across the school and making sure that all staff are consistent in the way they teach writing.
- Further support for writing has been put in place and is led effectively by the English team. Consequently, the systematic teaching of how to write for different purposes means that pupils apply their skills well. The recent visit to the local pantomime gave all pupils across the school opportunities to write with a clear sense of purpose, recommending the pantomime to members of the public. Pupils are confident about how to edit and improve their writing because they are now taught how to develop and use these skills in a variety of subjects across the curriculum.
- My second focus during the inspection was to look at how the most able pupils were being challenged in their learning. The proportion of pupils who made better than expected progress from their starting points was equal to the national average in 2017. We agreed that, in mathematics, the teaching of reasoning and problem-solving improved the outcomes for all pupils, including the most able. However, in writing, the progress made by the most able pupils was below the national average in 2017. During our short visits to lessons, we saw some good questioning by teachers and carefully planned activities targeted to the most able pupils in the class. Pupils were engaged in working out problems for themselves and then sharing their findings with others. The new writing programme introduced last year shows that, for the current pupils in key stage 2, progress is more rapid. This is because there are more opportunities for pupils to apply writing skills in different areas of the curriculum.
- The leaders for mathematics and English have looked at the way in which teachers meet the needs of pupils through providing exciting and varied activities which help pupils to improve. Careful monitoring of teaching means leaders are able to

quickly put in place any support that staff need in developing pupils' skills and knowledge. You recognise how phase leaders are holding staff to account effectively and are relishing the responsibility in leading their areas. Staff appreciate this leadership structure and say that it is helping them reflect on their practice but also allowing them to develop their teaching skills.

- We agreed that we wanted to focus on the attendance of pupils. You have been relentless in your work to improve attendance in the school. Your pastoral leader works closely with pupils and families. She monitors attendance carefully and you have set up an effective system so you can quickly step in to make sure all pupils attend school regularly. You have introduced a number of creative incentives, which have had a positive effect on improving attendance. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said they appreciated the certificates and badges for good attendance. As a result, attendance has improved for all groups of pupils to the national average and you have made significant improvements in reducing the number of pupils who have high levels of absence. Your 'zero tolerance' on lateness has also been welcomed by parents and pupils. One Year 2 pupil told me how important it was to be on time for school: 'If we're late we could miss out on all the exciting things we do.'
- Finally, we agreed that some disadvantaged boys in 2017 were not making as good progress as their peers. Your appropriate and timely intervention packages are closely monitored by the deputy headteacher and implemented by phase leaders. As a result, the difference in attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils is diminishing. Current information shows that disadvantaged pupils are doing well, making good progress towards expected standards in their reading, writing and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching, particularly in Reception, is more consistently good or better and the early years outdoor provision is developed to be as inspiring as the inside classroom
- more opportunities are provided for pupils to write at length and apply their writing skills across a range of subjects so that there is greater challenge in writing, especially for the most able.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Cave
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you and your deputy headteacher. I also met with the pastoral leader who has responsibility for attendance, groups of middle leaders and three teachers. I talked with pupils in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. I met with a representative from the local authority and two governors including the chair of the governing body. I also met briefly with the whole staff. I scrutinised a range of school documents including safeguarding records, personnel files, plans for school improvement, minutes from governors' meetings, curriculum plans, monitoring documents and your self-evaluation summary. I accompanied you on a series of tours of classrooms and the school, during which we observed teaching and learning. I also looked at the teaching and outcomes of the curriculum provided beyond English and mathematics. Together with your leaders for English and mathematics, I scrutinised a range of pupils' work in their books. I considered the 77 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and their associated free-text responses. There were no responses to the online pupil or staff questionnaires.