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Mrs Deborah Loane and Mrs Emma Balan
Partner Headteachers
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Dear Mrs Loane and Mrs Balan

Short inspection of Rookery School

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 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 July 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 have ensured that within the diverse pupil population there is an ethos of tolerance and respect for others.

All parents and carers spoken to or who responded to questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive about the school, its leaders, teachers and support staff. Almost all of the staff who responded to the survey said they were proud to be a member of the school staff.

Following your appointments as partner headteachers in January 2016, your joint leadership immediately had an impact on improving outcomes in the aspects you identified as key priorities. However, you and your leaders have been rightly concerned about outcomes for most-able pupils in key stage 2 especially in reading and writing. You and your team recognise that outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, who are not taught within the resource base, are inconsistent and that better checks need to be made on the progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Pupils enjoy a rich and diverse curriculum, which includes specialist teaching in art, music and physical education (PE) and a wide range of trips, which contribute effectively to developing pupils' writing.

Governors are very well informed and highly committed. They provide both support

and rigorous challenge to the school's leaders in collaboration with the school's external support.

At the time of the school's previous inspection, it was recommended that the school should raise the amount of outstanding teaching and raise the achievement of pupils further. You have maintained the good quality of teaching and learning and have ensured that outcomes, especially in mathematics and for disadvantaged pupils, have improved.

Safeguarding is effective.

A dedicated team of senior leaders ensure that a strong culture of safeguarding exists throughout the school. Leaders and governors are well trained for their roles and ensure that they keep up to date with the latest guidance. Records are kept securely and in a timely way. Members of staff receive regular training to ensure that they know how to identify any potential safeguarding issues. They are vigilant and know what to do if they have concerns.

According to the pupils spoken to, behaviour is a strength of the school and bullying is rare. If it happens they said it is dealt with straight away by leaders. Pupils said that they feel very safe in school and are well prepared to keep themselves safe out of school. They knew that they should speak to a responsible adult at home if they saw anything inappropriate on the computer. At school, they know they should report any concerns to the school's lead teacher for information technology. They said that if they got lost, when out shopping with their family, for example, they would only speak to someone in authority with an identity badge.

Inspection findings

- Disadvantaged pupils were a key priority for the school when you were first appointed. This led to an external review of the school's pupil premium spending, conducted by the school's improvement partner. As a result of well-targeted expenditure, disadvantaged pupils are now doing well in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Governors hold leaders to account to ensure that improvements are maintained. They challenge if any area of underperformance is identified. They engage well with external support as a means of monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school. Parents spoken to were full of praise for the leadership of the school, the quality of teaching and the support their children receive. They all said that the range of additional activities, pupil behaviour and relationships were significant strengths of the school. All of their text comments were positive. The very large majority of staff who responded to the survey said that the school had improved since the last inspection.
- Pupils have continued to take greater responsibility for their learning. Older pupils support younger ones through buddy schemes and reading to them. Peer mentors in the playground ensure that pupils have someone to talk to if they are worried or concerned about anything. There have been no fixed-term exclusions

this academic year. Attendance is rising and persistent absence falling.

- Leaders have placed a high emphasis on improving the proportion of pupils working in greater depth in writing by the end of key stage 2 following the most recent assessments in 2017. Leaders recognise that although pupils made above expected progress, none were working in greater depth by the end of Year 6. The rich curriculum ensures that pupils are gaining opportunities to write across a range of subjects. For example, pupils in key stage 1 have conducted a science project based on polar explorers. Pupils in key stage 2, working on the Tudors, were able to compose 'cinquain' poems. They could explain the meaning of the term and say how they are constructed. The experiences they gain from trips provide a purpose to their writing. They have explored the local area to learn about the engineer Matthew Boulton and visited Birmingham art gallery. A higher proportion of pupils currently in key stage 2 are now working at greater depth in writing and making strong progress.
- There was a dip in progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 where most-able pupils did not do as well as teacher assessments had indicated. Leaders have made reading, especially for most-able pupils, a key priority in the school. Pupils are now being prepared more for the rigours of the reading test in Year 6. Teachers are focused on developing pupils' skills in reading especially for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Pupils are also being exposed to a wider range of authors. The library and book club both have high take-up. As a result, a higher proportion of older pupils currently in the school are now working at a higher standard compared to previous years. Outcomes in reading and writing have improved strongly by the end of Reception, and, in key stage 1, including in phonics. Phonics is taught consistently well in the school.
- Pupils in the school's resource base for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and other pupils who have an education, health and care plan or statement of special educational needs have made strong progress. This is a consequence of carefully well-planned provision and support. Outcomes for other pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who have been identified for support has varied in the last two years. They were very high in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2016. However, outcomes were more mixed for these pupils in these assessments and tests at the end of Year 6 in 2017. The extent to which pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, as well as those who speak English as an additional language, are challenged to do as well as they can in their writing varies. In these pupils' books, teachers do not adhere to the school's marking and feedback policy as closely in other subjects as they do in English. In the most recent tests and assessments at the end of key stage 2, pupils who speak English as an additional language did not make as much progress as other pupils nationally. Their outcomes are not tracked as rigorously as they are for other groups of pupils.
- Pupils in key stage 2 have not had the opportunity to study a modern foreign language in lessons since the school's specialist language teachers left almost two years ago. However, the after-school Panjabi club is popular with those pupils who attend.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- most-able pupils in key stage 2 make more rapid progress in reading
- a higher proportion of most-able pupils are working in greater depth in writing by the end of key stage 2
- teachers' expectations for pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar are consistently in line with the school's marking and feedback policy across foundation subjects, including for pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
- outcomes and provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language are tracked by leaders as closely as they are for other groups of pupils
- more pupils have an opportunity to study a modern foreign language in key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with both of you, other senior and middle leaders, and other members of the teaching staff. I also met with three members of the governing body, including the chair, and the school's external improvement partner.

I carried out a learning walk of lessons jointly with you and your deputy headteacher, which included scrutinising pupils' books and talking to pupils. I observed learning with a senior leader in the school's resource base for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.

I observed pupils' behaviour around the school. I spoke to a group of pupils from key stages 1 and 2.

I met with six parents on the gate and took account of eight responses to Parent View free text and 325 responses to the school's most recent parental questionnaire. I also reviewed 39 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, pupil performance information, behaviour information and school policy documents, as well as safeguarding and child protection records. I also checked the school's website.