

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



27 March 2018

Mrs Sue Thompson
Headteacher
The Ryde School
Pleasant Rise
Hatfield
Hertfordshire
AL9 5DR

Dear Mrs Thompson

Short inspection of The Ryde School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your staff have continued to create a caring, calm environment, as identified at the previous inspection. This enables pupils at The Ryde to develop strong academic and social skills and the opportunity for 'everyone to shine'. Many parents commented in Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, on the support and guidance offered by staff to pupils and parents. Parents commented, 'Teachers work hard and show a lot of dedication' and, 'The school feels like a large welcoming family, where the teachers know the pupils and families well.'

Your leadership is complemented well by your deputy headteacher and all staff agreed the school is well led. Staff are proud to be a member of the school and enjoy working there. You have used professional development to encourage, challenge and support teachers' improvement. The school has strengthened leadership by investing in specific training to develop senior and middle leaders. This has assisted them in their work to drive improvements, particularly in early years and mathematics.

In collaboration with your leadership team and the board of governors, you are addressing effectively the priorities identified in your school improvement plan. The previous inspection identified that learning activities did not always interest pupils and there were insufficient opportunities across a range of subjects for pupils to write at length and practise their skills. You have addressed this through the creative curriculum you provide, which supports pupils to apply their knowledge and skills. During the inspection, pupils could tell me many memorable experiences they have enjoyed, such as making and burning model houses while learning about the Great

Fire of London. Books and displays show that pupils have had many opportunities to write extended pieces of writing in a range of subjects, such as Greek myths in Year 6. As a result, writing is of a high standard across the school.

Pupils are very well behaved. This is because they enjoy coming to school due to the 'fun activities'. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and strive to rise to the expectations that staff set them. One pupil said, 'We never stop learning.'

There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities which pupils enjoy. The breakfast and after-school clubs have been a good addition to the school for working parents.

Pupils feel valued and included in school life. Some pupils have recently been working with leaders to update the school vision. Pupils develop kindness and consideration for those less fortunate. For example, the school council regularly arranges fundraising activities such as coffee afternoons for local and national charities. Pupils have the opportunity to engage in democracy, for example by naming the two new guinea pigs. The Eco-committee are keen to improve the local area for the community. They have recently taken part in a litter pick-up in a communal area and have written to the council asking for new seating for residents. Consequently, very many pupils are developing into reflective members of the community.

Governors have a range of skills and expertise. They are highly committed and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, providing a balance of challenge and support. Governors share your high expectations for pupils and know the school well, including its strengths and areas for development. The governors are regular visitors to the school. They work with you to monitor and evaluate the impact of improvement actions.

You correctly judge the early years provision to be a strength of the school following taking effective action. Strong leadership in early years has ensured that children make a good start to their learning at The Ryde. The learning environment is well organised, bright and stimulating. The proportion of children making a good level of development has continued to rise and is above the national average. This is because staff ensure that expectations are high, routines are clear and tasks are typically engaging and well matched to children's needs.

You recognise that there are still areas which need to improve. For example, you acknowledge that some pupils in key stage 1 could achieve better in reading and writing from their starting points. You also know that some pupils in key stage 1 and 2 could make even more progress in mathematics. You rightly identify that differences remain in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils compared with that of other pupils nationally who have similar starting points. You also know that pupils' attendance at school needs to improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding undertake appropriate

training. They ensure that staff receive regular training in safeguarding to enable them to follow the school's procedures. The school's records are detailed and maintained well. They show where there has been involvement of support agencies, with actions followed up in a timely way.

Pupils told me that they always feel safe and happy in school. They know that they have adults in school who will listen and help. Pupils can define bullying accurately and state that it does not happen in the school. E-safety is promoted well throughout the school, which ensures that pupils know how to stay safe online. Pupils explained to me that through lessons, specific activities, such as bike-ability, and especially arranged talks on topics, such as road safety, they understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children are kept safe. One parent commented, 'I feel like my child is in very safe hands'.

Inspection findings

- To confirm that the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about pupils' achievements in key stage 1. Although attainment at the end of key stage 1 in 2017 improved from the previous year, the progress some pupils made, from their starting points, was below the national average. You and your leadership team have focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1. As a result, current pupils in key stage 1 are making good progress from their different starting points. However, you acknowledge that you need to continue these improvements so that pupils make even better progress.
- Your leadership structure allows the deputy headteacher to be non-class-based this year. This has enabled her to complete a variety of activities to improve the quality of teaching and learning, such as mentoring staff and working with small groups for additional support. You have also developed your middle leaders to be responsible for areas across the school. As a result, leaders are very well informed about the quality of teaching and the standards of pupils' attainment and progress across the curriculum.
- You have also reviewed the transition from early years to key stage 1 so that pupils are better prepared for Year 1. This has included adapting the curriculum so that there is continuity between the two key stages. As a result, current pupils in Year 1 are confident, successful learners.
- You have developed effective tracking and monitoring systems. Pupils who need additional support in key stage 1 receive swift and pertinent provision to help them catch up.
- My second key line of enquiry was about pupils' achievement in mathematics at both key stages. Although attainment in key stage 1 was in line with the national average in 2017, the progress some pupils made from their starting points was below average. Progress in key stage 2 was lower in mathematics compared to reading and writing in 2016 and 2017. Some pupils could have made better progress.
- You have put in place improvements to the teaching, learning and assessment of

mathematics across the school. There is now a well-designed mathematics curriculum which includes logically sequenced programmes of learning through a wide range of activities. Pupils now have a greater range of resources to support their understanding of calculation methods. Pupils told me that using actual objects has helped them with their learning in mathematics.

- Although these changes are quite recent, they are already having a positive impact on standards. As a result, current school information and evidence in books show that most pupils are making good progress.
- Leaders recognise there is further work to be done to ensure that all teachers replicate the strong practice seen in most classes. For example, in a small number of classes, teachers do not consistently provide opportunities for learning to move on quickly enough through more challenging activities. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress as quickly as they could.
- I also sought to establish how well disadvantaged pupils achieve. While the number of these pupils in each year group is very small, they did not perform as well as other pupils in school and nationally in 2016 and 2017.
- You have a good understanding of the barriers to learning that these pupils face. Using this information, you have planned support that is well matched to enable these pupils to catch up quickly. Pupils explained to me that additional sessions have helped them with their learning. You also address the emotional and social well-being of these pupils where necessary. For example, you provide support through a family support worker to remove identified barriers to learning.
- Your careful tracking of the progress that each pupil makes and evidence from pupils' books demonstrates that, currently, disadvantaged pupils are typically making good progress, often from low starting points. However, attainment often remains below that of other pupils, particularly those reaching greater depth. You acknowledge that more work needs to be done and have identified where this is the case.
- My final key line of enquiry was to evaluate how effectively leaders have improved attendance. While attendance has been in line with the national average in recent years, it decreased in 2017. Persistent absence also increased to above the national average in 2017. Current attendance rates are slightly lower compared to this time last year.
- Rigorous monitoring procedures are in place, which have enabled you to identify issues which prevent some pupils attending well. Too often, this is due to unauthorised term-time holidays, despite working with parents and carers to ensure that they are aware of the importance of regular attendance at school.
- You have recently revised your attendance policy to ensure that your high expectations for attending school are clear and your procedures when following up absences are consistent. Should the need arise, support is in place not only for pupils, but also for families. School information shows that improvements in attendance have been made for each pupil receiving this support.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements continue in key stage 1 so that a higher proportion of pupils make better progress from their different starting points in reading and writing
- the recently introduced mathematics curriculum becomes secure and pupils make accelerated progress in key stages 1 and 2
- disadvantaged pupils, in key stage 1 and 2, increase their attainment and progress across the curriculum so that they are at least in line with other pupils nationally
- parents and pupils understand the link between exemplary attendance and academic achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Welch
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss progress since the previous inspection and to agree the key lines of enquiry. I also met with a group of governors, including the chair, pupils eligible for pupil premium, the school council and Eco-committee. I spoke to a representative from the local authority. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including your self-evaluation, the plans for improvement and assessment information for all year groups. I also examined the school's safeguarding and child-protection procedures, the records of checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and information regarding attendance. We visited lessons and looked at books in all classes. I also looked at 77 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 17 staff survey returns.