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Mrs Galiema Amien-Cloete
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Amien-Cloete

Short inspection of Rotherhithe Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 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 provide strong leadership to the school and are ably supported by senior leaders who carry out their roles effectively.

The school has been on an exciting journey that has led to a recent hard federation with a local school. This is already beginning to make a positive difference to the quality of governance and leadership. Parents and pupils typically support the increased opportunities for greater participation. For example, on the day of the inspection, a choir performed for parents of both schools in the federation. This leads to increased opportunities for the community to participate in joint events.

The last academic year was particularly challenging for the school, because of staffing turbulence and problems in recruitment. Consequently, the progress and attainment of pupils across the school fell. You have tackled these past problems head on and ensured that the quality of teaching and learning has improved. Senior leaders are accurate in their evaluations and demonstrate strong capacity to embed further improvements. Leaders recognise that recent changes in staffing, including newly appointed middle leaders, mean that some challenges remain.

Pupils behave well and willingly share their views about the school. For example, one pupil shared a commonly held view that the school's work on 'mindfulness' helped them to concentrate in lessons. Parents share typically positive views about the school and recognise the work of leaders to help keep their children safe.

Governors strive for the very best for pupils and provide strong support to leaders.

Governors have an in-depth understanding of the school's journey and priorities. They keep up to date with regular training and visits to the school. For example, governors worked closely with a local authority adviser as part of a school review. This helped governors to increase their own understanding of the school, including of pupils' progress from different starting points. Governors have benefited from strengthening their own expertise and skills through the recent federation. This helps governors to check the effectiveness of leaders' actions with more precision.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pre-employment checks are thorough, and staff demonstrate a strong understanding of the school's procedures should they have a concern.

The safeguarding team comprises a wide range of staff and they collaborate very effectively to keep pupils safe. Leaders have an insightful understanding of the wide-ranging needs of their community and work proactively to provide families with targeted support. Leaders' work to raise the awareness of female genital mutilation (FGM) among parents, carers, pupils and staff is exemplary. They are rightly proud of being a lead school in the local authority for their work around FGM. Pupils speak positively about the school's work to teach them about online safety, including the potential dangers of social media.

Inspection findings

- We first agreed to check leaders' effectiveness in improving the quality of teaching and learning. We identified this because in 2017 pupils' progress and attainment were not as strong as in previous years, due to numerous changes in staffing.
- You ensure that the quality of teaching and learning remains a high priority. Leaders have tackled inconsistencies in teaching, and staff value the support they receive. Many staff told me about how leaders promote their well-being, including through 'well-being weeks'. As a result, morale is high and staff feel proud to work at Rotherhithe Primary School.
- During the inspection, positive working relationships between staff and pupils were evident. Adults interact well with pupils, and teaching assistants provide effective support through good questioning. As a result, pupils typically make sustained progress, particularly in their writing. For example, Year 6 pupils wrote fluent and detailed diary entries about surviving an air raid as part of their work on the Second World War. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school because they regularly check the quality of teaching and learning.
- We next looked at the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve pupils' reading. I chose this because, since the previous inspection, pupils' progress in reading fell. In 2017, the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining at least the expected standard in reading was below the national average. Leaders and governors recognise that many pupils do not have routine access to reading books at home.
- Pupils benefit from strong phonics teaching. Adults demonstrate good subject

knowledge and help pupils practise previously learned sounds. Pupils have regular opportunities to use their phonics skills in their writing. Leaders ensure that they check the quality of phonics teaching and assessment information regularly. However, lower-ability pupils lack fluency when reading because they do not consistently receive effective support to read with expression. As a result, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

- Pupils are typically positive about their reading lessons. For example, Year 6 pupils demonstrated resilience while reading about Macbeth for the first time. Adults, including teaching assistants, were effective in supporting these pupils to access the text through well-targeted questioning. However, pupils do not typically have an in-depth understanding of a range of quality books. Many pupils told me they enjoyed reading entire books with their teachers, but this was not a regular occurrence. In some reading lessons, pupils read books that are too easy for them, which hinders their progress.
- Finally, I focused on the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve attendance. I chose to look at this area because in 2017 pupils' attendance fell to below the national average. Pupils who had special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities had persistent absence rates that were well above the national average.
- Leaders know vulnerable groups and families well. They identify families with complex needs and are ensuring that the school works more closely with external agencies. Leaders have recently begun to work more strategically around attendance, including involving the special educational needs coordinator to support pupils' attendance. However, these initiatives are too recent to have made a difference to pupils' attendance, which remains below the national average. Persistent absence of pupils, particularly that of those who have SEN and White British boys, remains above the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching and learning in reading continues to improve, so that the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard is at least similar to the national average, by:
 - ensuring that lower-ability pupils have regular opportunities to develop their fluency and expression while reading
 - ensuring that pupils have exposure to challenging and high-quality reading books during their reading lessons
- pupils' attendance and persistent absenteeism, particularly for those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and White British boys, improves to be at least similar to the national average.

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

Yours sincerely

Noeman Anwar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited classrooms and scrutinised pupils' books, accompanied by senior leaders. I carried out a review of the school's documentation, including the school's attendance and safeguarding information. I held meetings with senior leaders, governors and the school improvement adviser from the local authority. I gathered the views of pupils in lessons and in the playground. Finally, I considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys, including 64 responses from parents, 85 responses from pupils and 38 responses from staff members.