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Mr Andrew Fullagar
Headteacher
Richard Alibon Primary School with ARP for Cognitive and Learning Difficulties
Alibon Road
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Dear Mr Fullagar

Short inspection of Richard Alibon Primary School with ARP for Cognitive and Learning Difficulties: SEN Base

Following my visit to the school on 26 June 2018 with Christopher Birtles, Ofsted Inspector, 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 September 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, your leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school. This includes a commitment to improving pupils' outcomes, ensuring that pupils develop in confidence and are respectful of each other. This ambition for pupils is firmly underpinned by your school's core values.

Alongside your leadership team, you have created a calm, welcoming and safe school environment. Pupils, including those in the additional resourced provision, are well cared for and supported. As a result, they are eager to learn and most make strong progress in their learning and development.

Since the last inspection, you have taken positive steps to address areas for improvement. For example, you have provided training for teachers on how to better challenge and support pupils in lessons. As a result, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are now at least in line with national averages at both the expected and higher standards. However, the very strong progress made by pupils in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 is not matched by the progress made by pupils in both reading and writing. You and your leaders are therefore focusing on ensuring that stronger progress is also made in these areas.

You have also developed strategies to communicate and engage effectively with the parent community. This includes the establishment of the volunteer group, 'Parent Voice'. You and your leaders encourage parents to be actively involved in the life of the school by, for example, attending mathematics and reading workshops. This also gives parents the skills to support better pupils' learning at home. Your work in this area is having a positive impact on improving parental engagement and pupils' outcomes.

Responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were positive overall. Most parents would recommend the school to other parents. They say that their child is happy at school, that children feel safe and that the school responds well to concerns that are raised. However, some parents are concerned that issues affecting their children are not dealt with effectively by school staff and that communication between home and school is limited when issues arise. You acknowledge that more needs to be done with a number of parents who currently lack confidence in the school to meet their children's needs.

School governors are actively involved in the life of the school, and together with the leadership team have taken part in monitoring the work of the school. This has developed their knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The chair of governors is a national lead for governance. She works hard to ensure that all governors are provided with the necessary training so that they can fulfil their statutory functions well. Governors demonstrate that they have the skills appropriate to the school's needs. They hold school leaders to account by asking challenging questions in meetings, which focus on pupils' outcomes. They also proactively deal with parental complaints when they arise.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding is promoted in the school. Written records are of high quality and show that swift action is taken as and when needed. This includes referrals made to outside agencies such as children's social care. These are then followed up with rigour as required. School leaders are diligently committed to ensuring that the school gives safeguarding the highest priority. Staff training is thorough and regular updates are provided. As a result, all staff are aware of their safeguarding duties and understand what to do in the event of a disclosure or if they have any concerns about a pupil.

School governors undertake regular checks on the school's safeguarding procedures. This includes monitoring of the single central record which meets statutory requirements.

The majority of pupils who completed the online survey said they feel safe at school and that they know who to speak to if they are worried about anything. Incidents of bullying, including cyber bullying are rare. When they do arise, they are dealt with effectively by adults and in line with relevant safeguarding policies and procedures.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed to focus on three key lines of enquiry. We first looked at the impact of leaders' work to improve outcomes in reading and writing for most-able pupils. This is because in 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2 was significantly lower than mathematics. Also in 2017, attainment outcomes for most-able pupils at the end of key stage 1, compared to their end of Reception starting points, were lower than national averages in reading and writing.
- Teachers provide the most able pupils with focused support in small groups. Your monitoring shows that this approach is helping these pupils to make faster rates of progress. Increasingly, teachers provide the most able pupils with activities that are designed to meet their learning needs. In a Year 2 writing lesson, for example, the most able pupils were challenged to apply a range of punctuation accurately, including speech marks, when writing a descriptive paragraph about being on board a pirate ship.
- Teachers have received training on how to develop specific reading skills, such as inference. They are increasingly confident in using questioning to challenge the most able pupils. However, work does not always provide pupils with sufficient challenge. This is because new reading and writing approaches are not yet consistently applied across the school. Consequently, and despite school data showing that most able pupils are making stronger rates of progress, some pupils are still not making the progress of which they are capable.
- The second key line of enquiry related to the impact of leaders' work to improve pupils' phonics skills and knowledge. This is because over time, phonics outcomes by the end of Year 2 have been lower than the national average.
- The quality of phonics teaching has improved. Phonics training for teaching and support staff has made a positive difference. Adults model new sounds, which are accurately repeated by pupils as they develop their understanding of new and unfamiliar words.
- Pupils are organised by ability into different phonics groups. Staff plan sessions that are tailored to pupils' specific learning needs. We saw good examples of pupils being challenged to apply their phonics well and use their newly acquired phonics to write sentences.
- Pupils who read to inspectors demonstrated a strong and secure understanding of phonics. They used strategies well to work out unfamiliar words. As a result, the provisional phonics outcomes in both Years 1 and 2 have significantly improved.
- The final key line of enquiry related to attendance and persistent absence. In recent years, overall rates of attendance have been below the national average. Also, persistent absence figures have been significantly above the national average.
- You and your leaders have worked relentlessly with families to improve attendance. Strategies throughout the school are working well. For example, a financial reward for the class that has the best attendance has resulted in one class having 10 consecutive weeks of 100% attendance. As a result, current school data shows that, compared to the same period last year, attendance is

improving.

- Rates of persistent absence are also reducing. Families are supported by the school and by outside agencies. This includes providing families with 'attendance mentors' when attendance falls below 95%. The school's use of positive rewards rather than punitive sanctions is also having a positive impact on levels of persistent absence. Leaders are fully committed to engaging effectively with parents so that their understanding is developed about the impact of poor attendance on their children's outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- greater challenge is provided for the most able pupils so that these pupils make better progress in reading and writing
- strategies are developed to improve communication and engagement with parents.

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

Yours sincerely

Calvin Henry
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspectors carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- a meeting with all staff at the beginning of the day
- meetings with you, your deputy headteacher, senior leaders, the school business manager and the office manager
- a meeting with the safeguarding lead and a review of the school's documentation linked to safeguarding
- a meeting with three school governors
- a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority
- visits to classes from Reception to Year 6 to observe learning and look at pupils' work
- conversations with parents at the beginning of the school day
- conversations with pupils during lessons
- listening to pupils in key stages 1 and 2 read

- scrutiny of a range of school documentation, including the self-evaluation, school development plans and the school's assessment information
- analysis of the 48 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- analysis of the 85 responses to the pupil survey and 22 staff questionnaires.