

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs D Rogers
Headteacher
Newlands School
Waverley Road
Middleton
Manchester
M24 6JG

Dear Mrs Rogers

Short inspection of Newlands School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2019 with Kathleen McArthur, 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

There has been an increase in the number of pupils who have more complex needs attending the school. Leaders have responded effectively to this change by expanding and adapting the school environment. New classrooms and additional outdoor spaces have been added with adapted equipment to ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity. You and your team continue to ensure that all pupils are welcomed into the Newlands family. This was evident during the whole-school assembly attended by all pupils and staff as well as a large number of parents and carers. The pupils are proud and happy to receive awards and to celebrate each other's success.

Pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. You and your staff work effectively to make sure that you meet pupils' educational, personal and social needs. For example, parents said that they have seen a big improvement in their children's social skills including being polite and speaking confidently. Parents were overwhelmingly positive about the school. They said that their children really enjoy school, making comments such as, 'Newlands is an amazing school with a wonderful atmosphere. It is clear to see how much the staff care about the children.'

The school is co-located with a mainstream primary school with shared spaces including halls and corridors used by all pupils. Leaders have instilled a culture where pupils are comfortable, friendly, open and respectful to each other. The high

ratio of staff to pupils ensures that pupils move around the school in a safe and supported way. Pupils' behaviour continues to be a strength of the school, with systems and procedures working effectively to support them in learning to manage their emotions and behaviour. The shared reception area also helps to build relationships between the two schools. Parents, pupils, staff and visitors all use the shared space and there is an ethos and atmosphere of inclusion and respect.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement that inspectors identified in the previous inspection. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet or social media. Through a range of learning experiences, including drama, dance and stay-safe workshops, the most able pupils can explain how to remain safe when using the internet or social media. For example, they told me, 'Don't give out your password' and 'Don't make friends with anyone you don't know.' During the inspection, a group of older pupils showed that they could make the right choices when finding a bottle in a playground. They knew what to do to keep themselves safe and were able to explain what they should do, including 'Tell an adult.' A dedicated team of staff keeps parents informed and up to date about information on staying safe, social media and e-safety through workshops, letters and information and guidance on the school website.

Also, since the last inspection, all pupils now have their own specific targets. Teachers are meticulous in their assessments of pupils' learning and personal development needs and as a result pupils' ongoing targets are precise. Teachers have high expectations and know the small, achievable steps that pupils need to make along the way. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together and make sure that each step of progress is recorded clearly.

Teachers and leaders check on individual pupils' progress well. However, you are still refining your system to allow you to check and report more easily on the progress made by groups of pupils with similar needs.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. The designated lead and the safeguarding team make sure that any referrals to the local authority and other agencies are timely. Leaders are persistent in following up such referrals. Records of the required checks on members of staff are compliant and thorough.

There is a very strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Policy and procedures are followed closely. Staff know the pupils very well, are quick to notice any changes in pupils' behaviour and refer any concerns to the safeguarding team. Staff training is up to date and robust. The staff value the regular 'seven-minute briefings' that enable them to keep abreast of signs and symptoms of abuse as well as local and national updates. The safeguarding governor challenges and supports the school well. She also ensures that leaders complete an annual safeguarding audit, provided by the local authority, so that school policies and procedures comply with the local authority's guidelines.

The secure entry system ensures that only signed-in visitors can gain entry to the school.

Inspection findings

- One of the key lines of enquiry that I explored with you was whether pupils make good or better progress from their starting points. Leaders have implemented new assessment and tracking systems and this works well to measure the small steps in progress for each pupil. Teachers also use pupils' education, health and care plans effectively to ensure that their personal targets are appropriate and meet their needs. Teachers provide pupils with a progress book when they enter the school. Steps in progress are recorded and the book follows the pupil from class to class. This enables each teacher to see the progress made year on year. Your assessment records show that the vast majority of pupils make the progress expected of them and some make more than this, across a wide range of subjects. This good progress is also evident in pupils' learning journals.
- Teaching is specific and detailed to match pupils' individual needs. For example, during morning break, each pupil has a target involving social, language or communication needs. One pupil was reminded to use the visual prompt to request fruit. Another pupil was prompted to ask for fruit in a full sentence. One progress book showed how a pupil had moved from being able to concentrate for three minutes to now being able to attend a class in the mainstream school independently for forty minutes. The close matching of teaching to pupils' needs strongly supports the good progress made by pupils, including the disadvantaged.
- The most able pupils are challenged appropriately. For example, they have the opportunity to join their mainstream peers in the co-located school. This has a positive impact and has challenged the most able pupils across mathematics, English and other subjects. Teachers set aspirational targets for these pupils and enter them for national tests where appropriate. This ensures that the most able pupils also make good progress from their starting points.
- The collaborative working between school staff and therapists has improved pupils' communication and language development. Throughout the inspection, pupils communicated with inspectors in a variety of ways, using sign language, verbal cues, picture and symbol methods. Staff support pupils effectively in communicating independently. Leaders have also invested in resources, including technology, music, drama, dance, lunchtime clubs and quiet spaces. As a result, pupils are collectively engaged and motivated to learn. In addition, their independence, personal and social skills are developing well.
- Another focus for the inspection was how effective leaders' recent actions have been in strengthening the progress of pupils with the most complex needs. Leaders identified that the curriculum needed to be further strengthened to ensure that pupils of all abilities had good access to learning. Changes, with a focus on pupils' engagement, have been carefully planned with staff to ensure that pupils with complex needs have access to and fully engage with the curriculum. Teachers are now more flexible when responding to pupils' individual

needs. They speak positively about the recent changes and how they are trusted to be innovative and creative, which has resulted in a higher level of pupil engagement. Changes are recent but there are already positive signs of success. For example, at lunchtime, pupils with complex needs engaged well in an interaction and movement session.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new system to check on pupils' progress is further refined so that leaders can report on the progress made by groups of pupils with similar needs more easily
- the new, refined curriculum for pupils with the most complex needs is embedded so that these pupils can further engage in their learning and make even stronger progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Bather
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors met with you and senior leaders. They held a meeting with three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of Rochdale local authority. Inspectors met with the safeguarding leads and scrutinised paperwork and safeguarding records, including the record of checks completed on staff. Visits to classes and other areas were undertaken and pupils' books were scrutinised. There were eight responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) and inspectors met with nine parents. They took account of the 34 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff, spoke to staff during the day and also met formally with a small group of staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils informally during the day and met with eight pupils. They observed behaviour in lessons and around the school. Documents were scrutinised, including: information about pupils' progress; the school's self-evaluation; the school's improvement plan; records of pupils' attendance; and information relating to the work of the governing body.