

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mr Ivan Pryce  
Headteacher  
Strathmore School  
Station Road  
Twickenham  
TW1 4DQ

Dear Mr Pryce

### **Short inspection of Strathmore School**

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2019 with Karen Matthews, 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 your predecessor 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.

You and your senior team know the school well and have an honest and accurate view of its strengths and areas for further development. You have very high expectations both of staff and of pupils. The number of pupils on roll has increased and almost doubled since the previous inspection. More recently, you have moved to three new campuses, all located on the site of mainstream schools. These changes have presented challenges that you are successfully managing.

You and your team provide a welcoming and nurturing environment for your pupils who have severe and complex learning needs. Staff know pupils exceptionally well and relationships are positive.

Parents and carers told inspectors that they are pleased with the school and say that their children are happy. They say the atmosphere of the school is both positive and supportive, with staff always available to listen to them.

On the day of the inspection, classrooms and corridors were calm and pupils' behaviour across the school was excellent. Pupils told inspectors they have opportunities for making friends with the co-located mainstream schools and enjoy lunchtime clubs together. They also told us that they are happy; they are listened to and given opportunities to make decisions about school life.

You and your senior team ensure that staff are well supported. Staff told inspectors that they value the professional development you provide for them. This has included leadership training for some middle leaders and for teaching staff on how to deliver the mathematics curriculum. Middle leadership, however, still requires further development so that it is more consistent across the school. Staff also said you consider their well-being and that they feel appreciated. They told inspectors that communication and cohesion within the school are very strong.

Governors are very supportive of the school and are particularly keen to make sure staff well-being has a high priority. They play an active role in the life of the school and visit regularly. The chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the academy trust know the school well. They understand the challenges of a growing school and the need to attract high-quality teaching staff. The school improvement partner has an accurate grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development, enabling an appropriate balance of support and challenge.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is exceptionally well led and managed. Staff training is relevant and up to date. There is a comprehensive induction programme for all new staff. Staff understand the vulnerabilities of the pupils at the school. They are effectively trained to identify signs of possible abuse and how to report it through a robust online reporting system.

Parents said they believe that the school keeps their children safe. The support provided to individual families is substantial and enables them to access the most appropriate additional help. Pupils said they felt safe in school. They know what to do to keep themselves safe and who to talk to if they are worried about anything. Staff are aware of possible online safety risks for pupils. All staff have had e-safety training.

Behaviour is very well managed and, where appropriate, pupils have a behaviour support plan. These are well thought out and used to notice patterns and changes in behaviour. Exclusions are very rare.

Nearly all pupils attend school regularly. Attendance is well tracked and monitored. There are clear processes and procedures in place that have impacted positively on improving individual pupils' attendance.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed on some key lines of enquiry. Firstly, we agreed to look at what leaders have done since becoming an academy to improve the quality of teaching. To do this, inspectors visited classes across all three school sites accompanied by senior leaders. They also looked at relevant school documents.

- In many lessons, activities were well matched to pupils' needs. Progress within lessons was best when pupils were challenged to stretch themselves in their learning. In many classes, assessment was well used to inform planning, and this supports pupils' learning.
- Pupils were seen enjoying lessons where sensory experiences were successfully included. We also saw the effective use of communication devices that pupils used for choosing and making requests. This gives pupils their own voice.
- Pupils were given opportunities to work as independently as possible, for example when preparing PowerPoint presentations for their annual reviews. These pupils were keen to talk to inspectors, to explain what they were doing and to demonstrate their computer skills.
- In some classes, there was not enough challenge in the tasks that the pupils were set. Consequently, pupils were not making the best possible progress of which they are capable. There were occasions when pupils were left waiting for the next task and were not engaged in learning activities.
- Senior leaders have a very accurate view of the quality of teaching across the school and this is well monitored. Consequently, they know where to target appropriate support to secure improvements.
- Next, we agreed to look at how well pupils make progress as they move through the school. Nearly all pupils make expected or above expected progress with their individualised targets based on outcomes from their education, health and care plans. Senior leaders have a detailed knowledge of pupils' needs and what they need to do to move their learning on. Assessment was used consistently and captures progress across the classes that inspectors visited.
- Joint target setting takes place for each pupil between teaching staff and additional support staff, including therapists. There are regular meetings with the staff teams from all school sites and the other school in the academy trust to discuss target setting. This ensures that the process and the progress measured are as accurate and reliable as possible.
- Finally, we agreed to look at the effectiveness of leadership throughout the school in driving forward school improvement. Senior leadership is consistently strong across the school. The senior team know exactly what needs to be done to improve the school further. Leadership within the early years provision has a clear impact on the quality of the provision and outcomes for children. Curriculum leadership of mathematics across the school is similarly effective, with clear guidelines for teaching staff in the delivery of lessons. Other staff say they have benefited from the mathematics training that has been on offer. Therapy provision is also well led and managed across the school.
- Senior leaders are very aware of the need to strengthen curriculum leadership expertise within the school. This will enable new and less experienced teachers to access additional subject-specific support for teaching and learning.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leadership is further developed across the school so that the curriculum fully meets the needs of all pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Richmond Upon Thames. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Tarrant  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you and your deputy headteachers, assistant headteachers, middle leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and other staff, including the school business manager, family support worker and therapists. We reviewed the school's single central record of staff suitability checks. We also met with a group of parents, the school improvement adviser, members of the governing body, including the chair, the chief executive officer and the chair of the board of trustees of the academy trust. Inspectors visited classes across the school, accompanied by you and other senior leaders, to gather a range of evidence related to teaching, learning and assessment. We met with pupils to talk about their experience of school and aspects of safeguarding. Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, and assessment and progress records. Inspectors took account of the 40 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 14 free-text responses to Parent View. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.