

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Maxine Mallett  
Headteacher  
Rutherford House School  
217 Balham High Road  
Balham  
Wandsworth  
London  
SW17 7BS

Dear Mrs Mallett

### **Short inspection of Rutherford House School**

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 2019, 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 July 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Rutherford House is good school where pupils are keen to find out new things and share their views and ideas. They learn very happily together. This is because trustees and members of the local advisory board, school leaders and staff are all committed to fulfilling the trust's motto, 'Learn, Enjoy, Succeed'. This was evident from talking to members of the school community, including pupils, and from the many positive written comments from parents on Ofsted's online questionnaire. As one parent summarised, Rutherford House is 'a nurturing school with a holistic approach to the enrichment of the pupils' education and experience'.

Since the last inspection, the school has more than doubled in size. It has expanded from four classes in Reception and Year 1, to 12 classes from Reception to Year 5. You have successfully built a team of high-quality leaders and teaching staff who understand the school's priorities. Staff are appreciative of the training and development opportunities available to them. These help to refine and build on their strong leadership skills. Effective mentoring by the senior leadership team means that teachers who have joined during the school's planned expansion are very well

supported. Staff understand what actions need to be taken to improve the quality of pupils' education further. This contributes to the sustained high outcomes across the school. Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 remains consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has been above the national average, with year-on-year improvement. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development has remained above the national average.

The school is an oasis of calm, where children are taught the importance of doing their best and persevering if they initially encounter difficulty. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes during the inspection were exemplary. This is typically the case because pupils are well supported by staff to engage with their learning and form positive relationships with others. As a result, they enjoy their learning. Pupils reported that they feel safe. They were confident that adults will listen to them, and that any concerns they raise will be acted upon.

Staff use their knowledge of pupils well to provide a stimulating environment and engaging curriculum for all. This is supplemented with a range of after-school clubs and activities. Staff and parents enhance the feeling of community at Rutherford House. For example, there are over 100 registered parental volunteers, and leaders have recently introduced more enjoyable and creative homework projects. Pupils told me how much they enjoy their learning and appreciate the diverse experiences on offer. They benefit from the school's broad and balanced curriculum. This has been developed to help pupils put into practice the school's six values: respect, ambition, resilience, enthusiasm, reflection and partnership.

You and your leaders have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and areas that need further improvement. This is because the leadership team and members of the local advisory board are committed to developing and delegating leadership capacity across the school. All class teachers lead learning and have a particular area of responsibility. They are well supported by dedicated and skilled senior leaders.

You have established an ambitious curriculum, which gives pupils the knowledge and cultural understanding they need to succeed in life beyond school. Subject leaders are intent on developing their subjects further and receive effective support from senior leaders. They evaluate the impact of their actions and contribute well to whole-school improvement planning and review. You have successfully addressed all the areas for improvement that were identified from the last inspection.

Governance is a strength of the school. Trustees' ambition for all pupils to learn, enjoy and succeed is infectious. A highly skilled local advisory board supports their work. In accordance with the trust's lines of delegation, the board is committed to ensuring a rich curriculum experience as the school expands. Trustees and members of the board have a strong understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and of the school's performance. They use their knowledge and expertise well to challenge and support school leaders. This ensures educational

standards are maintained or improved upon, during a period of change.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Staff, trustees and members of the local advisory board have undertaken suitable training in keeping pupils safe. They know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Adults spoke informatively about their training around a range of safeguarding risks. These include children missing in education, female genital mutilation, extremism and radicalisation. Clear procedures are in place for staff to pass on any concerns they may have about a child. Written records are detailed and well maintained. Support and advice are sought from external agencies, where necessary, and referrals are made in a timely way. A recent external audit of the school's safeguarding procedures, commissioned by the trust, has further enhanced school systems.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. This is the foundation for a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders have developed a curriculum which teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, and about the importance of high attendance to promote the best learning. Since the last inspection, attendance has continued to rise and is above national averages. Very few pupils are persistently absent.

### **Inspection findings**

- In this short inspection, we focused on a few aspects of school life. We looked at the teaching of writing in key stages 1 and 2. This was because, although standards in writing are high, you identified that, at the end of last year, they did not match those in mathematics. We considered how leaders, including middle leaders, promote opportunities to support the development of writing across the curriculum. We also looked at the provision on offer to support child-initiated learning, with a focus on communication, language and literacy in the early years.
- Leaders in English have had a positive effect on the teaching of writing. They have provided regular training for staff, including joint planning of lessons and teaching together. This has raised expectations of teachers and pupils and resulted in a consistent approach to the teaching of writing across different subjects. Evidence in pupils' writing and from work on display, reflects the strong progress pupils make from their various starting points.
- Staff are accurate in their assessment of what each pupil can do. This was reflected in discussions with teachers and pupils, and from sampling a range of writing across different subjects. The revised marking policy is applied routinely, which is valued by pupils and staff. Pupils spoke of how much they appreciate individual discussions about their learning with their teachers in lessons. Staff successfully use these conversations to ensure that future learning activities are pitched correctly and promote pupils' further progression in writing.
- Pupils commented that planned 'big questions' and learning, and the 'hot questions' and 'challenge tasks', help them to 'really think', and get better at their

writing. They value the many opportunities for them to contribute to and talk about their learning. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their writing and learning across the curriculum, and writing standards are high.

- In lessons visited, teachers and other adults were seen developing pupils' language and literacy skills effectively across different subjects. Teaching staff use the school's 'pacing sheets' to plan learning well. Adults know when to intervene and when to step back. They use effective questioning to encourage discussion, so that pupils are supported to explain their ideas. Teachers regularly check pupils have a good understanding of different writing genres and know how to choose appropriately in their different subjects. For example, pupils' work in their topic books demonstrates the same high expectations for writing as seen in their literacy books.
- A full review of the early years was undertaken at the start of the academic year. External professional early years support and training for all staff has ensured a consistent approach in the way adults plan. This supports children's early communication, language and literacy skills. The early years curriculum contains rich opportunities for talking to support early writing. Adults plan many opportunities for children to engage with text. For example, they re-tell and rehearse their own stories and ideas verbally and illustrate their ideas through story maps.
- Children's work shows that adults support children's early writing well. In-school records and observations of children's early writing show strong progress from their starting points. It is too soon, however, to gauge the impact of the redesigned indoor learning environment in supporting additional opportunities for children to write independently.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they consolidate the strong practices seen in the early years environment to further strengthen children's independent writing skills.

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 Wandsworth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jean Thwaites  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the school manager, the chief executive officer, the senior leadership team and a group of staff, including your English and early years leaders. I spoke to three trustees, including the chair of the board of trustees, and held a separate meeting with four members of the local advisory board. I visited lessons with senior leaders, observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' books and spoke to pupils about their learning and views of the school. I reviewed a range of documentation, including records of your checks to keep children safe. Leaders' own evaluations of the school's performance and records of pupils' achievement were also considered.

I took account of the 148 free-text responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, the 11 responses to the pupils' survey, and 37 responses to the staff survey.