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Mr Francis Gonzalez  
Headteacher  
Richard Cloudesley School  
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1 Prebend Street  
London  
N1 8RE

Dear Mr Gonzalez

### **Short inspection of Richard Cloudesley School**

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 2018 with Helen Morrison, 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 outstanding in November 2014.

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

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

You have created a school where leaders, governors and staff have the highest ambition for all pupils. Only the best will do. You all hold the view of ensuring that pupils are as independent and well prepared as they can be for the next stages of their lives. All staff are extremely successful in making this happen for pupils. The school community has worked together exceptionally well to create a safe, inclusive, happy and welcoming school. Pupils, taking into account their different needs and abilities, are thriving. They make excellent progress.

The senior leadership team works extremely well together, and this is to the benefit of all pupils. Governors provide effective challenge and support to school leaders in equal measure. They choose to undertake regular visits to the school and, therefore, have a detailed understanding of the school's work and also how well individual pupils are achieving.

The areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection have been met in full. Teachers assess pupils' progress meticulously to ensure that they learn effectively and use this information wisely to further shape and adapt their learning experiences.

#### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Staff and governors at the school understand how vital safeguarding is. Staff

have a clear understanding of all safeguarding-related policies and procedures. They know pupils' needs fully, for example their medical conditions and intimate care needs. The effective use of healthcare workers and therapists all combine to help ensure that pupils are not only safe but that they are treated with respect and dignity at all times.

Leaders also provide effective support for families. The parent coffee mornings provide a safe space for parents both to support each other and to discuss how they can provide continued support for their children at home. Parents believe that their children are safe at the school and well cared for. The support systems, including helping families to access additional resources outside of the school, are excellent. The school works tirelessly to make life better for pupils and their families.

Safeguarding records are kept meticulously. These provide evidence of swift follow-up and appropriate action taken by leaders. Leaders' strong relationships with outside agencies and the early action they take are effective in supporting vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders keep all safeguarding matters under regular review and learn from their experiences. The single central record for pre-recruitment checks meets requirements and is checked at regular intervals by the governors.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the beginning of the inspection we agreed to focus on four areas. These were the progress that pupils make, the teaching and learning of English, the suitability of the wider curriculum and the well-being of pupils.
- The first key line of enquiry focused on how leaders know that groups of pupils make consistently good or better progress from their starting points. This is an area that has been refined since the last inspection. Your assessment systems are well understood by staff and pupils alike. Staff track pupils' progress systematically. You and senior leaders then use this assessment information in a highly analytical way, which secures an in-depth understanding of how well pupils are achieving. As a result of this, progress, in all groups, including disadvantaged pupils, make equally strong progress from their very low starting points.
- When a pupil is identified as not making sufficient progress, the school acts swiftly to put in place interventions to help them catch up. These interventions are not just academic but also support pupils' well-being. This is so that pupils, who may be away from school for extended periods of time, are still able to continue learning.
- Pupils also make strong progress in their personal development. These small steps of progress are carefully tracked by teachers and used to inform their planning. 'All about me sheets' linked to education healthcare targets bring together further information about pupils and their preferred learning styles. These aid staff in planning relevant, high-quality learning experiences for all.

- As a result of this detailed planning and assessment, outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are particularly strong, with the vast majority of pupils meeting their targets, and some exceeding them. The quality of learning in the pupils' folders is extremely high, and shows a relentless drive for high standards.
- The second key line of enquiry dealt with how well leaders have developed teaching in English to ensure that tasks are well-matched to pupils' needs and abilities and are motivating and relevant to pupils. This is an area that the school had identified for development before the inspection.
- On visits to lessons, inspectors saw well-thought-out and well-planned activities which captured progress in reading and writing. The work done by the school's health and therapy teams also routinely shape provision. This is part of an ongoing and meaningful dialogue between professionals. The school contributes to the research and development of equipment such as communication apps. Their evaluations, when concluded, will be of benefit to pupils not just at this school but potentially in many special schools.
- The use of communication devices across the school is exemplary. All staff are highly skilled in communicating with the pupils, using these devices to support them in learning effectively. In addition, highly engaging resources, books and topics are well matched to pupils' needs and interests and where possible linked to real life. As a result of this reading and writing, outcomes are engaging and age appropriate.
- The third key line of enquiry was about how the curriculum meets individual pupils' needs. Leaders and teachers are extremely careful in their design and implementation of the stimulating curriculum. They have ensured that it is carefully matched to pupils' different needs. The curriculum is planned with the input of the school council, to ensure its relevance. Teachers then consider what pupils can already do and include the use of therapeutic support to help pupils access their learning.
- Leaders and teachers review the curriculum regularly to establish what pupils have or have not been able to achieve. As a result, pupils are making strong progress across the curriculum. This assessment of the wider curriculum is not yet formally captured with the same level of depth as it is in the core subjects of English and mathematics. Leaders are aware of this and have plans in place to address this in the new academic year.
- Visits to lessons showed that challenge is evident for most-able learners. This is because the curriculum maps clearly set out a range of skills and knowledge to be taught in each subject area. These are exceptionally well differentiated for all groups. There is a wide range of coverage across the key stages and observations and work scrutiny show that the pupils are taught a range of challenging objectives, especially in science.
- The curriculum also sets in place timely and robust systems to support pupils with transition into adult life. These systems show real strength in preparing pupils for life after they leave school. The curriculum is rich, with useful and meaningful experiences. Parents appreciate this individualised approach and the

time taken to know the pupils' individual needs and personalities so that they can achieve their full potential.

- The fourth key line of enquiry focused on how leaders ensure the well-being of all pupils within the school. This is an area of extreme importance to the school, given the vulnerability of its pupils.
- Parents and staff feel that pupils are safe and well looked after at school. Inspectors agree. Leaders prioritise pupils' welfare and safety at all times. Staff are alert to any change in a pupil's behaviour or medical condition. For example, even the smallest changes in facial expressions are responded to swiftly as staff know and understand the pupils as individuals and people.
- Leaders feel that prioritising and developing pupils' independence, social and behaviour skills are vital in preparing pupils for their futures. In school, pupils learn to mix well together in all sorts of ways, formally and informally.
- Staff treat pupils with dignity and respect at all times. The quality of care provided to pupils is exemplary. Staff, parents and pupils agree that development of communication, championed by the school, is the key to this level of care. The attention paid to pupil voice is clearly a strength of the school. Pupils of all ages and communication abilities feel listened to and heard. They know that they are valued and their opinions matter. As a result of this, pupils flourish.
- Transitions are smooth from other settings and across key stages and information is always shared in a timely and sensitive way. This ensures that all pupils are ready to learn when they start at the school.
- Parents and carers are full of praise for the school and the difference it makes to the lives of their children. They appreciate the support given to them to help manage family life. They value opportunities to meet with staff, such as the learning mentor, to discuss difficult issues such as bereavement. They also value opportunities such as the school's out-of-hours provision. This is because the service provided by the school gives their children social engagement and interaction with peers where they might otherwise become isolated. They appreciate that this is not just childcare and see that it helps the pupils unlock untapped talents and potential.
- The school outreach service, which is commissioned by the local authority, is a flagship provision that delivers high-quality and high-impact training to other schools. In this role the school has also been involved at a strategic level, supporting the local authority with gathering intelligence about emerging trends in special education. This, in turn, has enabled the local authority to plan accordingly for pupils across Islington.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they formalise the work that is already in development to capture progress in the foundation subjects
- they share their exemplary practice with other schools locally and further afield.

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

Yours sincerely

Karen Matthews  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors held meetings with you, senior leaders and other members of staff. I had a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body. I also met with representatives of the local authority, the school's outreach service, your school improvement adviser and members of the therapy teams. My colleague met with pupils and parents. We visited classrooms across the school with senior leaders to gather evidence about our key lines of enquiry and to look at pupils' work. We considered documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, information about the use of pupil premium funding, information about pupils' progress and documents related to safeguarding. I also looked at information on the school's website. We analysed the confidential responses to the online inspection surveys from 49 members of staff. I also took account of the views of the five parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey.