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Ms Sophie Allen
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Allen

Short inspection of The Stonebridge School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 2017 with Rani Karim, 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since the last inspection, you have altered the leadership structure and now have two deputy headteachers. This provides the school with a strong leadership team. You have been unable to appoint a leader for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You and your deputy headteachers are working effectively together to share and ensure that this group of pupils continue to receive high quality support. The school context remains a complex one. You work hard to ensure that the two sites are united as one school. Mobility remains high and the pupil population has changed with an influx of new arrivals. The majority of new arrivals speak little or no English, have erratic prior schooling and additional learning needs. You, your senior leaders and governors are dedicated to removing the many barriers that pupils and their families face. You have made positive staff appointments to support these families so that pupils can thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

Parents who responded to the survey are overwhelmingly positive about the school. This mirrors the responses from your own parent survey last year. They state that it is a good school where different religions are respected. Staff and pupils share the views of parents with one staff member commenting that, 'It is a joy being part of this school's community.'

The school's previous inspection report recommended that leaders raise the

proportion of outstanding teaching. Despite changes in staffing, you have maintained a good quality of teaching. You use the expertise of your strongest teachers to model effective practice so that the proportion of good teaching is maintained and developed. You acknowledge that you need to continue to embed current initiatives to secure improvements in reading and writing. You also wish to refine your assessment approaches to provide a more concise overview of the many pupil groups within the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safeguarding culture in the school is strong and is recognised as a strength by the local authority and the local schools' partnership. You share your considerable expertise in training a range of local staff and governors. You have established effective reporting systems which are consistently used by staff. You work closely with a range of agencies to support families and move quickly when difficulties arise to ensure pupils' safety. You monitor the attendance of all vulnerable groups to ensure they are safe, including those who have an education, health and care plan, whose attendance has improved since last year.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. They appreciate the range of opportunities provided for them to share any worries they have. Typically, pupils say, 'I speak to my art therapist about things I wouldn't share with anyone else.' Your curriculum provides a range of opportunities for pupils to learn to keep themselves safe. Consequently, pupils speak knowledgeably about online safety and female genital mutilation. You work closely with the police neighbourhood team so that local safety issues, such as knife crime, can be addressed within the curriculum and support pupils in making wise choices.

Inspection findings

- We chose to look at how leaders are ensuring that pupils in key stage 2 are making as much progress as possible in reading. This is because the progress in Year 6 last year was below the national figures, in particular for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able. Consequently, the proportion of pupils who met the national standards was also below the national figure.
- You have developed a structured approach to reading and are focusing on developing vocabulary and inference skills. Core texts have been introduced for all classes and provide pupils with quality reading experiences as they move through the school. Pupils spoken to enjoy the shared texts. One commented, 'I loved sharing a poem as a class.'
- Guided reading lessons have clear learning objectives so that all pupils make good progress in their reading skills. This is evident in the stimulating group reading journals, which cater well for pupils' different starting points. The format of the journals is increasingly consistent across classes. However, you and other leaders agree that there is further work to be done to embed this approach. This includes making better use of the information in the journals to assess both

reading and writing.

- On our visits to guided reading lessons we saw teachers provide engaging and appropriate activities for all groups of pupils. Those who struggle with their reading focused on understanding and applying key vocabulary. The most able pupils were questioned effectively and challenged by teachers to explain their understanding of new vocabulary and excerpts in the text. In other literacy lessons we saw reading skills being promoted through a clear focus on reading aloud, clarification of vocabulary and class discussions of the text. You agree that at times, pupils at the very early stages of reading are provided with texts which are too challenging when working independently and this limits their progress. Similarly, the quality of questioning by all adults remains a focus to ensure pupils are challenged in their comprehension of texts and vocabulary.
- Pupils read fluently and with intonation. They demonstrate a good understanding of what they are reading and can answer questions related to the text, including those with inference. Year 6 pupils have good strategies when reading unknown words. New arrivals in Year 5 are able to decode key vocabulary using their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent). This indicates effective phonics teaching for older pupils.
- Current assessment information indicates that all pupils in key stage 2 are making good progress in their reading. There remains only a small number of the most able pupils in Year 6 who were in the school at the end of Year 2. These pupils have made good progress and the vast majority are working at a high standard. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress overall.
- You have already identified writing as a school improvement priority and we agreed to focus on the progress in writing across the curriculum in key stage 1. This was because in 2016, Year 2 pupils did not meet the national standard for writing; their progress was not good enough. We also looked at the progress of the most able pupils because they did not make as much progress as others nationally.
- You have put in place a range of effective initiatives to support the teaching and learning of writing in the younger classes. You promote the development of pupils' spoken language through drama, the use of exciting resources and teachers' planning for speaking opportunities in all lessons. These initiatives are helping pupils to apply their developing spoken language to their writing. In our visits to lessons we saw a range of evidence of these approaches. Teachers explain vocabulary clearly and are effective in their approaches to developing pupils' spoken language. Greater use is made of drama and visual resources to stimulate pupils' ideas before they begin writing. Work in books across a range of subjects shows good progress in writing for all pupils. However, leaders agree that at times the most able pupils are limited in the amount of work they are expected to produce. This limits their opportunity to write at length and slows progress.
- Current assessment information indicates that pupils in key stage 1 are making good progress in writing. A higher proportion of pupils in Years 1 and 2, who were in the Reception classes, are working at the expected standards compared

to the 2016 group. This includes the most able pupils. A third of all pupils in Year 2 joined the school late, with very low starting points. Although assessment information indicates that they are attaining below the national figures, they make good progress from their very low starting points.

- Finally, we agreed to look at how effectively the early years foundation stage caters for the needs of boys so that they make good or better progress before moving to Year 1. We focused on this area because the proportion of boys achieving a good level of development in reading, writing and mathematics is declining over time.
- Your early years' leader has made effective changes to the curriculum so that there is an evolving, daily timetable which meets the interests and needs of children. The stimulating learning environment provides children with a range of exciting learning opportunities to develop their writing skills. Progress in writing is evident in learning journals; boys are involved and engaged in a range of creative writing opportunities such as being 'writing detectives'. Effective questioning to extend children's understanding and learning and high-quality small-group support enables more children to receive focused teaching. Consequently, children make good gains in their learning from their starting points and are better prepared for learning in key stage 1.
- The result of leaders' initiatives is seen in the assessment information, which indicates an improvement in boys' outcomes. A higher proportion of boys are on track to achieve a good level of development than in 2016.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- build on recent strategies in reading at key stage 2 to maximise the progress of all pupils, especially the most able and those who struggle with their reading
- provide more opportunities for pupils to write at length across all subjects in key stage 1, in particular the most able, so that they make as much progress as possible in their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Ridding
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We discussed the school's work with you and your deputy headteachers at the start of the inspection and throughout the day. We went on 'learning walks' with you and one of your deputy headteachers and jointly scrutinised pupils' work. During our visits to lessons, we talked to pupils about their learning. We listened to pupils read. We held meetings with leaders to discuss literacy, the early years and the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. We considered the responses from staff and pupils and from parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the Ofsted online survey. I met a group of pupils from Years 1 to 6. I spoke with a representative from the local authority and met with four governors. I scrutinised a range of documentation and information posted on the school's website.