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Mrs Beverley Hennefer
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Dear Mrs Hennefer

Short inspection of Royal Cross Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 June 2019 with Claire Hollister, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is despite recent changes in the leadership and governance of the school. The school continues to have good capacity to improve even further.

The school provides an oasis of calm and support in which pupils thrive and develop their self-esteem, resilience and independence. Arrangements for transition to secondary education are secure. Pupils move on to the next stages of education with confidence. Staff responses to the recent online questionnaire survey indicate that their morale is high. Staff appreciate the consideration that governors give to them regarding staff workload.

The one area for improvement arising from the last inspection is now a strength. Leaders have run successful workshops for parents and carers. These give parents the skills and confidence to support and reinforce the development of their children's reading and communication skills. Parents appreciate that the school keeps in close contact with them about the progress that their children are making. This is via an agreed messaging system.

Early years provision continues to be outstanding. Children enter this class with developmental levels below those typical for their age. By the end of their time in this class, some children are achieving age-related expectations in some aspects, for example in their physical development. Importantly, children make great strides in

their communication skills, especially in signing. This promotes their self-confidence and independence. Leadership of early years continues to be a strength, as does the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

The curriculum is wide ranging and enriching. For example, the school provides music, drama and swimming, as well as opportunities for educational visits and residential trips. The curriculum is pitched well to meet the needs of pupils who are deaf and who may also have additional complex needs. The pupils benefit from learning experiences that augment their vocabulary and that provide opportunities to develop their communication skills. Topics covered in the curriculum ensure that there is a focus on developing pupils' reading and writing skills in different contexts, for example in geography and science. Teachers and support staff are exceptionally attuned to each pupil's needs and abilities. For instance, those pupils who are able to hear are encouraged to use and apply their knowledge of phonics to spell and read. Other pupils are unable to hear the sounds sufficiently well to do this. However, staff teach them to learn whole words for later use in their independent writing.

Pupils' attendance is good. It has improved year on year since the last inspection, alongside a reduction in persistent absence. This is partly attributable to the drop in the number of families going on holiday during term time. Pupils' good behaviour and the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development continue to be strengths of the school. Pupils' attitudes to learning continue to be outstanding.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding. It is seen as a priority for all concerned at the school. Leaders and governors ensure that policies and procedures are in line with statutory requirements. There are named staff and governors who ensure that agreed policies are enacted fully in school. Staff and governors keep up to date with safeguarding training opportunities provided by the local authority. The chair of governors makes frequent visits to the school to check that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

School records indicate that there is effective partnership working with other agencies, so that vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate and timely support.

Safeguarding is taught through the information technology (IT) curriculum, so that pupils know how to keep safe online. Comments about this from pupils include: 'Everyone feels safe,' and, 'Staff give me rules for keeping myself safe online and with my phone.' All pupils said that there is an adult whom they can talk to if they have any concerns. Parents have also benefited from school-based workshops that have focused on the safe use of the internet.

The school's premises are safe and secure. There is appropriate fencing around the school playground. There are also effective procedures when admitting visitors to the school.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and staff have ensured that the school is extremely welcoming to pupils, parents and visitors alike. Teachers and support staff work incredibly well together so that pupils' individual needs, as defined in their education, health and care (EHC) plans, are fully considered. The quality of EHC plans is exemplary. However, the designated special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has not done the national SENCo training qualification.
- Classroom displays celebrate pupils' achievements. Pupils develop confidence and are keen to learn. This is because staff are knowledgeable and skilful when using signing alongside spoken language. This opens up a world of communication for pupils. As a result, pupils are able to access learning in a range of contexts.
- Soon after their arrival at the school, children in the early years class are encouraged to use oral as well as sign language. Where possible, children develop their knowledge and understanding of phonics so that they can start to develop early reading and writing skills.
- Pupils were asked to consider their favourite toys from a range of choices. Staff used creative and imaginative approaches to ensure that pupils maintained their engagement and concentration over an extended period of time. Pupils showed resilience and determination when thinking about and selecting their choices.
- Most-able pupils showed perseverance when reading challenging texts about motor cars. They were able to make use of their knowledge of phonics when decoding new words. They engaged in conversations about different car designs and the speeds that the cars could achieve, thus demonstrating their understanding of what they read.
- Less able pupils work well with skilled support staff to develop their spelling and independent writing skills. Other pupils with more profound hearing impairment were successful in learning whole words, as they were unable to hear or sound out specific letters and blends. They were then able to select words from a range of choices to write independently.
- Pupils benefit greatly from being able to visit areas of interest, for example, a nature park and a local mosque. These experiences broaden their links with the outside world and extend their language and vocabulary. Inspectors observed pupils referring to photographs from a recent trip when talking about and writing an account of this experience.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was enhanced further when they were able to rehearse for a local drama and music event. Pupils dressed up as 18th-century Georgian servants and performed a song and dance based upon an old Lancashire saga. They had written the words of the song themselves.
- Leaders have developed a clear and agreed system to help them to analyse the progress made by different groups, including those who speak English as an additional language. The majority of pupils make good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes those who are disadvantaged, the most able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

- Governors make excellent use of pupil premium funding. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from the intensive support that they receive from a designated teacher to help meet their EHC plan targets.
- When inspectors viewed some of the pupils' workbooks, there was evidence that some pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Occasionally, the presentation of pupils' work is not as good as it could be. Some pupils do not develop their independent writing skills or use and apply their number skills sufficiently well in problem-solving activities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they provide more challenge in English and mathematics lessons, so that the presentation of pupils' work improves
- pupils have increased opportunities to develop their independent writing and their use and application of number skills.
- the designated SENCo does the national SENCo training, in order to develop their professional attributes and improve their knowledge, understanding and skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Jon Ashley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the team met with you and the deputy headteacher. Inspectors conducted joint observations of lessons in each of the classes. This included an observation of the early years class with you and the deputy headteacher. A meeting was held with two governors, and one with the chair of governors. A telephone conversation was held with the school's adviser. Inspectors looked at pupils' learning journals, workbooks and folders and also at classroom displays. Inspectors observed pupils' conduct and attitudes on the school corridors and at breaktime.

Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including the school's review of its strengths and areas to develop, the school development plan and information about pupils' EHC plans, ability levels, progress and outcomes. Inspectors also looked at documentation relating to the following: safeguarding (including safe recruitment of staff and risk assessments), behaviour and attendance, and governing body reports and minutes of its meetings.

An inspector met formally with a group of pupils to seek their views about the school. An inspector met with parents who were on site at an early years class event. There were no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. However, inspectors considered three free-text responses from parents. There were no responses to the pupil online survey. Inspectors looked at nine responses to the online staff questionnaire.