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Mrs Patricia Cody
Acting Headteacher
Richmond Hill School
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Dear Mrs Cody

Short inspection of Richmond Hill School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 2018 with Ofsted Inspector Paul Copping, 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of outstanding as a result of this inspection.**

Since the previous inspection, the leadership has changed and much is new. You commenced your appointment as acting headteacher in September 2018. Over time, leaders and governors recognise that these changes have altered the current quality and impact of leadership. For example, leaders had not updated the school's website before this inspection, and a small number of parents and carers who responded to their online questionnaire, Parent View, or spoke with inspectors expressed dissatisfaction with the work of the school.

Nevertheless, the majority of parents are pleased with the school's work. One parent typically wrote: 'This is a fantastic school: my child has progressed beyond our expectations under the guidance of patient teachers and teaching assistants.'

Since the previous inspection, the planned opening of the new site has taken place, with a substantial increase in the numbers of pupils and newly appointed staff. As a leadership team, you have continued to ensure that pupils make consistently good, and often outstanding, progress across the school. You have maintained high-quality teaching across both sites. You have successfully addressed this area for improvement that was identified at the last inspection. You have effectively reorganised the leadership team and appointed an extra family worker to strengthen the school's work with parents.

You have swiftly established strong teamwork in the school, especially through your chosen approach to provide a new coaching system for staff. You have chosen this approach to raise standards and the quality of teaching and learning further. You have already strengthened the school's assessment system and are now ensuring that there is more consistency with its implementation across both sites. The impact of this on improving pupils' learning and progress has yet to be reviewed and cannot be evaluated currently.

You continue to successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including their awareness of fundamental British values. You achieve this through your effective approach to the curriculum. Pupils' behaviour and attendance continue to be strengths of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your family workers liaise closely with parents to ensure that pupils are safe. The school provides a safe environment for pupils. You continue to improve your documentation and safeguarding records. Staff report concerns and carry out detailed assessments of any potential risk there may be to pupils' welfare.

Currently, governors are beginning to check the quality of safeguarding arrangements in the school. However, the impact of their work on improving safeguarding further cannot be evaluated as it is too new. Governors now receive regular reports from family workers so they are better informed. Governors visit the school to examine the accuracy of the records of checks made on the suitability of staff to work at the school.

Staff provide high levels of supervision to keep pupils safe during the school day. Pupils move around the school in an orderly way. They play sensibly together outside and handle equipment safely. The majority of parents agreed in their Parent View responses that pupils are safe, happy and well looked after in school.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to determine how well leaders were developing pupils' language and communication skills through the school curriculum. This was because there is a high proportion of pupils in the school with limited communication skills and a significant proportion of pupils at an early stage of learning English.
- The school's information about the progress different pupils make shows that pupils are making outstanding progress in the area of language and communication. Teachers and teaching assistants are promoting communication consistently well over time.
- During our visits to lessons on both sites, we observed staff making effective use of well-chosen resources and methods to develop pupils' language and communication skills. Adults develop pupils' communication skills across a wide

range of curriculum activities, such as music and Zumba dancing, and through assemblies.

- I also wanted to examine how well new leaders were checking the impact of their work on increasing pupils' learning and progress. This is because the new leadership team has been in place for just three weeks.
- New leaders can already provide convincing examples and evidence of some improvements they have made in their systems and processes to monitor and increase pupils' learning and progress. These include regular visits to classrooms, looking at pupils' work and discussions with staff on the progress pupils are making. Leaders are ensuring that they maintain the outstanding learning and progress most pupils make across both sites of the school, which were recognised at the previous inspection.
- Finally, I considered how well governors have continued to hold leaders to account for the consistent quality of education provided. This was because the school's website was not up to date and did not contain the statutory information required.
- Governors recognise that, until recently, they have not continued to check the work of school leaders as well as they should since the previous inspection. Current evidence demonstrates that governors are beginning to check the quality of safeguarding arrangements.
- However, governors are not responding sufficiently well when parents raise concerns. Consequently, a minority of parents have a negative view of the work of school leaders and have expressed dissatisfaction with school leaders. Not enough has been achieved to change their perception.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders rigorously monitor the impact of their new systems on increasing the progress that pupils make
- governors rigorously update and check that all statutory requirements are consistently in place, especially relating to safeguarding processes
- middle leaders implement their plans and are effective in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- they communicate more effectively with parents and seek to address their concerns so that more of them are positive about the work of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Meetings were held with you, school leaders and six members of the governing body, including a separate meeting with the chair. There was a separate meeting with a parent governor. I also met with a representative of the local authority.

We visited lessons across both school sites and examined samples of pupils' work. We spoke with pupils and a small number of parents at the end of the school day to seek their views. We analysed the 35 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, together with 31 free-text responses. We also considered a small number of concerns raised by a few parents during the inspection. There were no responses to the pupil or staff questionnaires.

We scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including: the school's information on the progress pupils are making; the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding and procedures for recruiting new staff; records of attendance; incidents of behaviour and the use of restraint; the local authority's audit of safeguarding; records of training in safeguarding and the assessments of potential risks to pupils' safety; and minutes of governing body meetings. We also reviewed the school self-evaluation document and the school development plan.