

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



4 March 2019

Mr Steven Connors
Heronsgate Primary School
Whinchat Road
London
SE28 0EA

Dear Mr Connors

No formal designation inspection of Heronsgate Primary School

Following my visit on 6–7 February 2019 with Odogua Okolo-Angus, Ofsted Inspector, Linda Harvey, Ofsted Inspector and Sean Tobin, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about outcomes for pupils at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the two heads of school, all the senior leadership team, groups of pupils, parents, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements.

Inspectors sampled and reviewed a large number of pupils' books and observed learning in every year group. They undertook a number of learning walks with senior leaders. They reviewed the school's assessment information.

Having considered the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school continues to be outstanding.

You are an inspiration to your pupils, your staff and your community. Your self-effacing exceptional leadership qualities have nurtured a highly effective, confident, resilient, reflective leadership team. The heads of school work exceptionally well

with you and with other leaders across both sites to ensure that every member of this vibrant community is able to give their best and achieve well. Leaders exemplify the school values of cooperation, responsibility, democracy, respect, tolerance, honesty and humility. Pupils choose to emulate these and the rest of the school's values.

Your leadership team are cohesive, consistent and, together with you, they are supporting teachers to help transform pupils' lives for the better. You truly enable pupils to 'discover and realise their genius' and achieve highly. Heronsgate is an outstanding school with an exceptionally innovative, unique and personalised curriculum.

Pupils are respectful, interesting, lively, engaged and happy. They are proud of their school and their achievements. They take the many roles and responsibilities they have in the school seriously and perform them diligently to make the school an even better place for everyone to be.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff receive comprehensive training to ensure that they are vigilant and understand potential risks to pupils in their care. All staff in the community understand their duties with regard to keeping children safe and they know about potential local risks.

This is a school where policy very much informs daily practice. There is a strong culture of safeguarding evident throughout Heronsgate. Leaders and governors ensure that all necessary checks are undertaken when staff are recruited to the school.

Leaders make appropriate, swift referrals if they have concerns about a child and ensure that external services and agencies are involved when necessary. Leaders have a thorough knowledge of their pupils and their families, many of whom live in very challenging circumstances. Leaders and staff make sure that every pupil in the school feels equally valued and they help pupils believe that there are no barriers to their success in life. Vulnerable pupils are nurtured and supported and experience success at Heronsgate.

Context

There are 868 pupils on roll at Heronsgate, which is a four form entry primary school with early years provision. The school has two sites, one in Thamesmead and one at the Royal Arsenal. At the Thamesmead campus there are two part-time nursery classes and three forms of entry from Reception to Year 6. At the Royal Arsenal campus there is one part-time nursery class and one form of entry from Reception to Year 6.

There are approximately 9% of pupils who receive support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan. The proportion of pupils entitled to pupil premium funding is above the national average. The school serves a diverse community with over 53% of pupils speaking English as an additional language.

Inspection findings

At the start of the inspection, you and your leadership team agreed some key lines of enquiry for us to follow during the inspection. These were designed to test out how well leaders were supporting teachers to ensure that pupils who are currently in the school are making strong progress and achieving well.

Our first line of enquiry was to consider the progress that pupils who are currently in key stage 2 are making in reading. This was because the progress that Year 6 pupils made in 2018 was below that seen nationally for all schools.

We discovered a strong focus on reading permeated both school sites. Reading is given the highest priority. Displays in classrooms and around the school promote reading. Reading areas in classrooms and in the library entice pupils into reading. Reading volunteers successfully build individual pupils' confidence in reading and this helps pupils to make strong progress and to catch up with their classmates. Author focus work inspires learners to read and the excellent range of literature on offer at the school broadens pupils' reading experiences.

A unique and hugely successful feature of the teaching of reading is the way in which technology is used. Each pupil has a tablet for use in all curriculum areas. During reading lessons, this means that pupils are able to download texts which have been selected for them by their teachers, and work collaboratively with their peers to engage with and learn from the text. A great strength of this work is that pupils are reading to learn as well as learning to read. Even the most reluctant readers are highly motivated and inspired by the use of the tablets. This enthusiasm transfers itself to reading books. Pupils talk animatedly about the books they are reading at school and at home. This aspect of the school's work is an example of how you and your leaders think deeply about how to engage pupils in learning. Hence, they make excellent progress.

Teachers promote reading in many fun and inspiring ways. For example, for World Book Day, teachers dressed up as 'Where's Wally' and the pupils had to seek them out in school. This is indicative of staff's commitment to go 'above and beyond' for the pupils of Heronsgate School.

Teachers have responded positively to the professional development provided by leaders to enhance their teaching of comprehension skills. As a result, teaching has improved and is now consistently good across key stage 2. Leaders pinpoint precisely any gaps in teachers' subject knowledge and swiftly address them. As a

result of strong teaching, pupils are making consistently good progress across key stage 2. Progress in Year 6 is strong and improving because of carefully targeted teaching.

Any pupils who struggle with phonics in key stage 1 are swiftly supported with catch up sessions in key stage 2. Information gathered during the inspection shows that outcomes in reading are set to continue to improve as the current cohorts of pupils move through the school. This is because they have had consistently strong teaching of phonics and are now benefiting from high-quality comprehension teaching.

Teachers have worked hard to hone their skills in teaching pupils reading skills, both in a whole class and in smaller ability groups. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge during these sessions. However, occasionally in group sessions, those pupils who are not being directed or supported by an adult lose concentration. The purpose of some tasks is not clear to pupils and some sessions lack structure. Leaders recognise this as an aspect of their reading curriculum to strengthen further in order to accelerate progress in reading even more.

Our next focus was to look at how effective leaders and teachers have been in diminishing the gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others across the school. In recent years, there has been some reduction in these gaps but leaders recognise that further work is needed; their school improvement planning and self-evaluation reflects this. No one at Heronsgate considers disadvantage to be a barrier to success.

During all inspection activities, inspectors looked specifically at the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. We found that additional funding is well targeted to help diminish gaps in achievement. Work in books and the school's own information show that, over time, gaps are diminishing for disadvantaged pupils who are currently in the school. Leaders are never complacent about their work to close these gaps completely. From their starting points when they join the school, disadvantaged pupils make strong progress. Leaders precisely analyse the reasons why individual pupils do not make expected progress by the time they leave the school. Leaders and governors make no excuses for underachievement; they strive to understand the reasons why and are constantly adapting and improving their provision to make sure every pupil achieves the best that they can.

Pupil premium funding is targeted carefully and thoughtfully by governors and leaders to help pupils achieve the very best that they can.

Our next agreed line of enquiry was to evaluate how successful the school's curriculum is and how it helps staff to realise the school vision and 'discover and realise the genius in everyone'.

Inspectors found that the school's work in this area is exceptional. The Heronsgate Charter underpins the curriculum, which is rich, broad and provides extensive enrichment opportunities. The curriculum intent is clear. It provides pupils with skills, knowledge and, critically, an attitude that prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage of their education and for life. The Heronsgate Charter is threaded through all aspects of the school's work and consists of a list of 'to dos' in order to gain life and learning experiences. For example, pupils are challenged to 'perform to a large audience', one of many varied and interesting things 'to do'. The charter really motivates pupils to learn and to experience life to the full. Indeed, it had inspectors reaching for their pens to tick off how many items they themselves had experienced! The charter has been adapted by other schools in the area and has evolved into 'The Thamesmead Charter'. This is indicative of the many ways in which leaders support pupils and young people beyond their own school community.

This implementation of the charter alongside the curriculum ensures that pupils understand that the definition of achievement and recognition across this school is broad and inclusive. Leaders ensure that all pupils achieve and all pupils experience success. Disadvantaged pupils have equal access to a rich and diverse curriculum. All pupils' learning is supported by the personalised use of technology. Specialist music, French and sports teaching helps pupils to make strong progress in these areas. Pupils' beautiful art work pervades the school. The curriculum places great values on pupils' individual talents or 'genius'. Prioritising pupils' self-esteem through identifying what they are good at or interested in allows teachers to use the confidence and success pupils have experienced to help them become successful and make strong progress in the areas which they are less confident in. Inspectors spoke to large numbers of pupils and held several discussion groups with them to talk about learning. Pupils understood how unique and special they were and how 'amazing' their school is.

Pupils could confidently show inspectors work in books which they were proud of. The large number of books which were reviewed by the inspection team showed that pupils across the school are making consistently strong progress across a range of subjects because teaching meets their needs.

Our final line of enquiry was to consider the progress that children in the early years provision make from their starting points. Attainment at the end of the Reception Year has been well above average over recent years.

Children's skills and knowledge when they join the early years are typically below those seen nationally, although the current cohort entered with early number skills which are broadly typical. Teachers identify specific areas to prioritise when children start in the early years. For example, this year they have focused sharply on speech, communication and managing feelings and behaviour. Leaders also ensure that all areas of learning are planned for exceptionally well.

Inspectors found that children in the early years have made significant progress so far this year, particularly in the areas which have been prioritised.

The outstanding quality of education in the primary phase of the school is mirrored in the early years. Children with SEND are nurtured and make excellent progress alongside their classmates. Both sites use the inside and outdoor learning spaces innovatively to engage and inspire young learners. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and help children to swiftly make progress in phonics and early reading. Warm, supportive relationships between adults and children help children across this provision to thrive.

External support

The school values and responds well to the good advice they receive from the local authority.

The school is a national support school and the executive headteacher is a national leader of education.

Heronsgate is one of two lead schools in the Royal Greenwich Teaching School Alliance.

Subject leaders provide consultancy support to schools in the local authority.

Priorities for further improvement

- Strengthen independent group reading sessions to ensure that they precisely meet pupils' needs and enhance further the strong progress that they make.

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

Yours sincerely

Ruth Dollner
Her Majesty's Inspector