

3 April 2019

Mrs Tracy Bryden
Executive Headteacher
The Round House Primary Academy
School Drive
St Neots
Cambridgeshire
PE19 6AW

Dear Mrs Bryden

Short inspection of The Round House Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 19 March 2019, 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Leaders have taken effective action to secure continuous improvement and, subsequently, raise standards throughout the school. The Round House Primary Academy is a focal point for the growing community. You, and your staff, have continued to provide an inclusive ethos which promotes a passion for learning across the school. Parents were effusive about the school's care for their children. One parent summarised the views of many, saying, 'I honestly could not feel happier with the care my child has received. Her teachers are magical.'

Pupils told me that they love coming to school and, consequently, they attend regularly. They enjoy learning a broad range of subjects in a way that enthuses and encourages them to do well. For example, the school grounds have been developed to provide opportunities for pupils to explore the natural world and develop their understanding of the community around them. For example, pupils learn about healthy lifestyles by using the vegetables they have grown. They enjoy the school's chosen curriculum. Pupils are inspired by the hands-on experiences that teachers provide for pupils when introducing new topics each term. For example, by recreating models and designs of Roman architecture and Egyptian artefacts, pupils can explore, investigate and apply their learned skills.

Pupils greatly value the regular feedback that is given to them to help them to

redraft and edit their extended writing. Pupils I spoke to excitedly recalled lessons where well-chosen texts kindled their curiosity and captured their interest, such as 'Skellig' in Year 6 and 'The Iron Man' in Year 4. One pupil, who was less enthusiastic about writing, acknowledged that, 'It is good when the teacher shows us how to write well. He shows us so many words that we wouldn't normally use.'

Staff are proud to work at The Round House Academy. This is confirmed by those who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, including several new staff appointed in the last two years. Leaders have made changes to improve pupils' reading and their achievement in subjects in the wider curriculum since the previous inspection. Your work to develop the outdoor environment as a space for learning, for example, provides opportunities for pupils to enjoy a good range of activities where they practise and apply their literacy and other subject-specific skills. Pupils make good progress and achieve well.

Since the previous inspection in June 2015, you continue to be highly visible and approachable to pupils, staff and parents. Parents recognise and appreciate the way that you support them in working closely with you to further develop their children's interests and learning in reading. This is an example of the community links you provide to promote the school's vision to inspire pupils to flourish and achieve well.

Following the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve standards in writing. Leaders have developed a consistent, shared approach to the teaching of writing. They continue to focus on writing as a school improvement priority and regularly review pupils' feedback to ensure that pupils make increasingly better progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The designated safeguarding lead and governors are well trained and up to date with the latest guidance. Staff understand the importance of vigilance to keep pupils safe. Up-to-date training is regular and helps to sharpen staff's knowledge and understanding to ensure that all concerns are recorded quickly and staff are well prepared to support pupils' welfare.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on the progress of children in Reception from their starting points. This was because in 2018 the proportion of children attaining a good level of development was below the national average.
- The work in children's portfolios and the school's assessment information show that, specifically in communication and language, a number of children have starting points lower than is typical for their age on entry. Teachers skilfully model speaking and listening. They use a range of suitable approaches to promote and secure children's acquisition of early 'talking' skills. Small-group activities to learn letters and sounds ensure that children begin to apply their emerging phonics skills quickly. As a result, children are making good progress, particularly in their

speaking, reading and writing, and this is preparing them well for learning in Year 1.

- Another line of enquiry for this inspection focused on the impact of actions taken by leaders to improve standards of writing. This was a focus because it was an area for improvement from the previous inspection and standards have not risen significantly in key stages 1 and 2. Too few pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 attain greater depth in their writing by the end of their key stage.
- Leaders' actions have recently improved pupils' outcomes. Their focus on ensuring that 'good readers become good writers' is beginning to work. Strategies to improve pupils' experience of reading across the curriculum are improving the range and depth of vocabulary that pupils use in their writing. Pupils improve their grammar, punctuation and spelling as a result of applying their knowledge to their written work, following hands-on learning experiences across the curriculum.
- Leaders evaluate that this approach has had a significant impact on improving the teaching of writing, and subsequently pupils' achievement in writing in key stage 2. However, when I looked in pupils' books I found that while there is evidence that some pupils are making better progress, there is unevenness in the rate of progress and across different year groups and classes.
- My third line of enquiry was to look to see if standards of behaviour and attendance identified at the previous inspection have been maintained following the growth of the school and community.
- My findings confirm that the school is a happy and calm place to learn. Leaders are resolute about ensuring that pupils attend and behave well. Underpinning this determination is leaders' work to build and develop positive relationships with families, identifying problems and working together to find solutions. Consequently, the attendance of all groups of pupils is continually improving and the school's overall attendance is above average over time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in different age groups and/or classes across the school make consistently strong progress in writing
- the proportions of pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 attaining the expected standard and greater depth in their writing continue to rise.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cambridgeshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sean Powell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you, your senior leaders and your subject leaders, the chair of the local governing board, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer from the multi-academy trust. I spoke to individual pupils and members of staff around the school.

We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and conducted several learning walks around the school and looked in pupils' books.

I scrutinised a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation and details of pupils' attendance and behaviour. I evaluated child protection records, including the single central record. I also looked at the school's website.

In addition, I took account of 109 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and 51 free-text comments from parents. I also analysed 40 responses from the staff questionnaire.