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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 February 2019

Wendy Aldridge
Headteacher
Sullivan Primary School
Peterborough Road
Fulham
London
SW6 3BN

Dear Miss Aldridge

Short inspection of Sullivan Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 January 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders, including governors and trustees, have an accurate understanding of the school's many strengths and have clearly identified areas for further improvement. Together, you have built a cohesive and committed team of professionals, who are united in their desire to improve outcomes for your pupils. Staff feel valued and morale is high.

Sullivan is a very happy and nurturing school, which celebrates its community's diversity. The well-being of pupils, staff and parents is paramount and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the care their children receive. One parent commented, reflecting the views of others: 'It's a wonderful gem of a school, run by teachers [who are] happy to be there and [who] treat my children with love and respect.'

Sullivan offers its pupils a broad curriculum, which staff continue to develop. Displays show that pupils benefit from termly enrichment weeks, such as arts and community weeks. Pupils have the opportunity to attend a variety of extra-curricular clubs, which change termly. Certificates celebrating pupils' successes in graded examinations for a range of instruments, such as the cello, flute, piano and clarinet, are displayed with pride. Particular care has gone into designing the school's outdoor spaces. As one parent summed up: 'The outdoor space is a source of happiness for the children and is a wonderful opportunity for them to discover nature.' As a result of good teaching, and an interesting curriculum, pupils enjoy

coming to school. This is reflected in their excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.

School leaders receive strong support from the local governing body and the board of trustees of the multi-academy trust. Staff greatly value the opportunities they have to train, plan and share good practice with colleagues from the other schools within the trust. Leaders report that this professional dialogue has significantly contributed to improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

Although much is being done to continue to raise academic standards throughout the school, leaders must ensure that timescales for improvements reflect ambition and pace so that strong progress is made towards securing the best possible outcomes for all pupils, especially the most able.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have successfully embedded a very strong culture of safety. They have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are in place and fit for purpose. Staff and governors receive regular, comprehensive safeguarding training, in line with statutory guidance. As a result, they understand the role they play in helping to keep pupils safe. Adults know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil or colleague, including the headteacher. The safeguarding team has established clear systems and processes for recording and responding to concerns. Where necessary, timely referrals are made to the appropriate outside agencies.

Parents are confident that their children are safe in school. Pupils trust that their teachers will take care of them. Pupils report that there is no bullying at Sullivan. When incidents of unacceptable behaviour do occur, pupils are confident that their teachers will immediately take appropriate action. Pupils told me that behaviour in school is very good. Pupils can articulate how to keep themselves safe online.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed first to look at the impact of leaders' actions to improve standards in writing, particularly at key stage 2 and, especially, for boys. In 2018, the progress of key stage 2 pupils in writing was well below average, and in the bottom 10% nationally. The proportion of boys who achieved the expected standard in writing was below that of girls. In addition, too few pupils in key stages 1 and 2 achieved greater depth.
- You had identified writing as a key area for improvement in the school's self-evaluation. Recognising that pupils cannot write what they cannot say, leaders and teachers have worked alongside a speech and language therapist to devise a language curriculum for each year group. Teachers report that pupils' language skills are now developing more strongly, which is having a positive impact on their ability to write. Teachers have revised their planning so that there is a longer build-up to extended pieces of writing. High-quality texts have been placed at the centre of the English curriculum. Texts and tasks have been carefully selected to more closely match boys' interests. For example, in one year

group, pupils were asked to design a new gadget and then, subsequently, write a persuasive text in an attempt to convince MI6 to use their invention. These changes have positively impacted on boys' motivation and levels of engagement.

- Writing is celebrated throughout the school, with displays in corridors and classrooms that give pupils a sense of pride and achievement. Writing in Reception and in key stage 1 is of a good quality. Tasks are well planned for different pupils and resources are well used. This enables pupils of all abilities to write independently. There is a strong focus on the development of key skills. In key stage 2, pupils' work suggests that standards are higher than indicated by pupils' 2018 writing outcomes. However, when reviewing and improving their writing, pupils do not always act on the feedback they receive from their teachers. This limits their progress. Many pieces of writing which have the potential to be improved to the greater depth standard too often remain average.
- Our second inspection focus was to consider the extent to which leaders have been successful in improving attendance and lowering rates of persistent absence. In 2017/18, absence figures for all pupil groups were greater than the national average. In addition, rates of persistent absenteeism were double the national average. Over a quarter of pupils who speak English as their first language were persistently absent from school.
- You and your leaders have worked tirelessly and creatively to raise attendance and reduce levels of persistent absence. You are very mindful of the challenges presented by high levels of deprivation and have established very strong and supportive relationships with vulnerable families. You are soon to launch a new walking bus initiative, with support staff picking pupils up from their homes. Leaders work very effectively with one of the local authority's attendance support officers, who regularly visits the school.
- Every effort is made to engage parents in their children's education. Leaders regularly organise workshops for parents, for example on mathematical methods, phonics and internet safety. They invite parents to 'Stay and make' sessions prior to each enrichment week. One lovely example of this was when, in response to the text 'The Patchwork Quilt', parents came into school to sew an item with their children, using a piece of fabric that was significant to their own family.
- Pupils could articulate why regular school attendance is so important. You and your leaders have very successfully incentivised attendance. Pupils spoke animatedly about the termly attendance parties to which those with 100% attendance are invited. Pupils earn bronze, silver and gold awards for attendance above 96%. Classes with 100% attendance earn a board game to add to their 'wet-play' resources. There is a weekly attendance cup for the class with the best attendance. Leaders are proactive and continually look for new ideas and incentives to get pupils to come to school so that they can learn and progress.
- As a result of the tenacious actions your leaders have taken, attendance is rising and persistent absence is reducing. Persistent absence is now 11%, compared with 19.7% for the same period last year. Overall attendance has also improved from 94% to 94.81% and, for pupils in key stages 1 and 2, to 95%. The gap between the attendance of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium and their peers has narrowed from 4% to 2.8%. Though leaders have done everything that could

reasonably be expected of them to improve attendance, you recognise that there is still a way to go to bring attendance in line with the national average.

- Finally, we agreed to explore the extent to which most-able pupils are challenged to reach their potential. This was because in 2018, the proportion of key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils attaining the greater depth standard in reading and writing was below the national average, as was the proportion of key stage 1 pupils attaining greater depth in mathematics.
- Challenging the most able pupils is a key school improvement focus. Staff have benefited from high-quality and well-targeted professional development. As a result, teachers' planning takes into account the need to ensure that most-able pupils are challenged in every lesson. Most-able pupils' mathematics books provide clear evidence of challenge. Pupils are increasingly asked to explain and justify their reasoning, as well as being required to apply their mathematical knowledge to problem-solving and investigative work. Leaders now need to ensure that appropriate challenge is embedded across all curriculum subjects in the same way.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- timescales for improvements are ambitious so that strong progress can be made to secure the best possible outcomes for all pupils, including the most able
- when reviewing and improving their writing, pupils always act on the feedback that they receive from their teachers
- leaders continue to pursue every avenue to reduce absence and, in particular, persistent absence, so that it is in line with national averages.

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

Yours sincerely

Jan Keating
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher to agree the areas of focus for the inspection. Accompanied by senior leaders, I visited every class within the school, with the exception of Nursery, which had temporarily closed due to a flood. I spoke with pupils and looked at a range of work in their books. I

listened to a number of pupils read. I held meetings with two members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors. I spoke on the telephone to the chair of the board of trustees. I met with representatives from the school council, middle leaders and members of staff. I also met with you, your administrative officer and one of the local authority's targeted attendance support officers to discuss the school's efforts to raise attendance.

I considered a range of written evidence, including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan, records of governing body meetings, behaviour logs, attendance information, and the single central record of pre-employment checks. I also took account of the views of 84 parents and 31 staff who completed the relevant Ofsted online surveys.