

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



24 October 2017

Mrs Bronwen Caschere
Headteacher
Southbrook School
Bishop Westall Road
Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 6JB

Dear Mrs Bronwen Caschere

Short inspection of Southbrook School

Following my visit to the school on 12 October 2017 with Andrew Penman, 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 good in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes to the school. Over the last three years there has been a 50% turnover in teaching staff. There are new English and mathematics teams. There are also different teams who are responsible for specific areas of the school's work, such as the inclusion team. The new structures are enabling the school to continue to improve. You, other leaders and the governing body have managed these changes well.

Pupils' achievement continues to be good. The atmosphere in class is studious and conducive to thoughtful work. On the sports field, enjoyment levels are high, with pupils participating enthusiastically. Pupils generally report that learning is fun and they are keen to learn.

Last year saw the official opening of the new 'life skills centre' and sports hall. Pupils greatly appreciate the increase in their sporting experiences. They like the introduction of 'rugby for all', and the fitness suite, helping them to be fit and healthy. The new initiatives enhance pupils' social, moral, communication, mathematical and enterprise skills. A good example is the business enterprise project, which has also improved the allotment learning areas for all pupils. We saw how much they enjoy their gardening work. Pupils told us how much they

appreciate reading the new books in the library bus and experiencing the sensory garden.

Communication with parents and carers continues to improve. You are keeping them better informed through the new electronic communication system. You have established a successful 'adoptive parent group' in response to these parents' needs. Members of the group relish meeting each other, providing mutual support and empathy.

The leadership team has identified that middle leaders need more support and guidance. The detailed analysis of pupils' work has shown you that writing in subjects other than English needs improvement. You, and other leaders, are mindful of the need to keep under review the courses available for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, other leaders and the governing body ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and the staff work closely with the other agencies to secure the safety and well-being of pupils. A big focus recently has been on developing and supporting pupils' mental health. The pastoral team provides early help, interventions and support for families.

All staff have at the forefront of their thinking the safeguarding of pupils. When they have a concern they know what to do and whom to go to. Staff receive regular, appropriate training.

The safeguarding team keep comprehensive records, which they use to inform those that need to know. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and monitored, including by the governing body. The school makes appropriate adjustments to mitigate risk. When issues arise the school works flexibly, and adapts practice to reduce risk.

Inspection findings

- Our first line of enquiry on this inspection was to see how effectively you, and the governing body, were checking the school's performance. The effective use of target-setting was an area for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. The 'whole-school action plan' is fit for purpose. It focuses on the key issues for the school. It contains identified outcomes that are regularly measured throughout the year. This enables everyone to see where the progress of actions is on track. You make changes to the plan where needed. Monitoring by the governing body is holding you, and other leaders, firmly to account. They have a clear understanding that the pupil premium funding is being used wisely. Funds are successfully improving the outcomes for pupils.
- The action plans used by subject leaders have direct links to, and from, the whole-school action plan. However, they are not of the same good quality. We

discussed how they could be refined and how these middle leaders need more guidance and support to help them do this quickly.

- The inspection's second line of enquiry was to see if pupils were getting work that was suitably challenging and that they knew how to make improvements. This was an area for improvement identified in the previous inspection. We found that pupils' work matches that reported in the school's analysis. The work shows that pupils are making good progress. Feedback by teachers gives pupils the key messages they need so that they know what they need to do next. Pitching work at the right level ensures pupils' interest. They stay on task, behave well, sometimes get things wrong, and enjoy their learning.
- The third line of enquiry concerned the quality of pupils' writing across all their subjects, as a previously identified area for improvement. Your enhanced monitoring and assessment systems have ensured that the quality of pupils' writing matches their ability. It is also consistent in a range of subjects. However, pupils write at greater length and in a wider range of different styles in English compared with other subjects. We agreed that pupils need to do more purposeful writing in other subjects. You have already identified this as an area for development in your action plan for this year.
- The final line of enquiry looked at the courses that pupils were taking in Years 10 and 11. You have continued to adapt the courses available based on the needs, abilities and desires of each cohort of pupils starting Year 10. Pupils generally complete appropriate courses. They are well prepared for the next stage in their lives. When leaving school, all pupils continue in education, training or employment.
- We discussed how, given changes to the external courses available, and the increasingly complex needs of pupils, the school should consider offering an even wider range of accreditations. We noted that the type of courses for creative subjects could be extended. You have already identified that pupils find the entry-level physical education course too easy, but too difficult at GCSE level. You have already initiated the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and plan to extend the range of accredited 'physically active' courses available.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that middle leaders contribute even more strongly to the monitoring and evaluation of their areas of responsibility, to help further drive improvements for the whole school.
- continue to review the curriculum provided so that pupils:
 - write at greater length and in different, pertinent, styles in all subjects
 - have a wider range of accredited courses, particularly for creative and physical education studies.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We agreed the timetable and activities for the day. We worked extensively with you and other senior leaders throughout the day. We met with other leaders and members of the governing body. We spoke with groups of pupils and observed them during the day. We scrutinised the quality of pupils' work and observed pupils learning in lessons. Inspectors took account of the 15 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The 35 responses by staff and the four responses by pupils to Ofsted's electronic questionnaire were considered. In addition, inspectors took note of the 51 paper questionnaires from pupils provided by the school.

We considered a wide range of documentary evidence, including records relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, assessment information, the school's self-evaluation and action plans.