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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



29 March 2016

Mrs Zandra Wilkinson
Light Oaks Junior School
Lancaster Road
Salford
Greater Manchester
M6 8LU

Dear Mrs Wilkinson

Short inspection of Light Oaks Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 2016, 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 October 2011.

There have been a considerable number of staff changes since the last inspection. You became the substantive headteacher in January 2014. You restructured the senior leadership team. There is a new deputy headteacher in post. Two assistant headteachers and 12 out of 16 teachers are new to post.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have created a powerful culture of hard work and fun throughout the school. Pupils thrive; they are very keen to improve and take pride in their work. Most learn with enthusiasm, work harmoniously with each other and thoroughly enjoy being at school.

Your passion to do the best you can for the pupils at Light Oaks is infectious. Staff are inspired to work hard because they feel very well supported, are successful and enjoy the strong team spirit that you have engendered. They receive good training and believe the quality of their work is evaluated accurately.

Governors have high aspirations for the school and they have played a critical role in ensuring the school continues to improve. They have a broad range of experience

and skills. This enables them to both support you and hold you to account with rigour. Governors have that ensured all recommendations for improvement that were outlined in the last inspection report have been implemented. Girls' progress is much stronger and is broadly above average. Teachers ensure pupils have extensive opportunities to discuss their work and their ideas. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disability progress well.

Since the last inspection, the achievement of pupils has been consistently good across all subjects. Almost all pupils, across each year group, make the progress expected of them for their age. However, the proportion of pupils that exceed these expectations, while being good, is not outstanding.

You, other school leaders and teachers skilfully identify the reasons behind any slowing of pupils' progress and provide individualised strategies to help these pupils return to their expected rate of learning. The strategies you provide are as wide-ranging as the reasons behind the slowing of any progress. You have been able to achieve this particularly well for pupils in Years 5 and 6. You have well-developed plans in place to extend this support to pupils in Years 3 and 4. The plans include an extension to your building and the recruitment of three additional teaching assistants. The governors have secured funding for these developments.

You have identified a small, yet significant, group of pupils who do not believe, despite the support and encouragement of their teachers, that they can excel. You believe these pupils, who are spread across all year groups, have low self-esteem and therefore do not have sufficient confidence to take on greater challenges in their learning. Your response to this has been considerable and wide-ranging. There are some early signs of improvement in those pupils' attitudes and to the progress they make. Pupils are inspired by the school's culture of high aspiration, cooperation and happiness. However, for those who need it, there is an expanding support programme to improve pupils' mental health and emotional well-being.

Pupils behave very well throughout the school. There is very little low-level disruption of learning because pupils enjoy their work. Pupils look out for each other and care for any other child they think is unhappy or unwell. When they get into the playground they play energetically, but always safely and respectfully.

Overall, pupils' attendance is improving this year and is broadly average. However, there is a substantial group of pupils who are persistently absent. Leaders have identified who these pupils are and are taking action to improve their attendance. Nevertheless, more work has to be done to work in partnership with parents to improve the attendance of this group of pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. There are rigorous procedures in place to ensure pupils are safe. All staff are well trained. They know what would raise concerns about potential abuse or radicalisation. Staff know how to make a

professional response to any concerns. Leaders have demonstrated their determination to keep children safe by making referrals to the appropriate authorities. Pupils themselves play a powerful role in ensuring all are safe. Pupils know how to stay safe because they have been well taught. Pupils care for each other. Pupils trust staff in the school and, consequently, would confidently discuss any problems they may have or raise concerns about other pupils.

Inspection findings

- Governors have worked successfully with you to create a very harmonious school where pupils work hard, are happy and enjoy learning. The pupils of Light Oaks are respectful and caring.
- Leadership at all levels is strong. All staff have a common vision and they strive to ensure all pupils achieve as well as they can. Staff understand clearly how they contribute to the realisation of this vision. All staff work very well as a team to the benefit of all pupils in the school.
- The quality of teaching is consistently strong. Those staff with leadership responsibilities for subjects are experienced and talented. They understand clearly how their subject should be taught and are also able to guide others to teach well.
- The best teachers in Light Oaks inspire their pupils. They know in detail what their pupils already understand and can do. They use this to ensure new learning activities are pitched at just the right level to motivate pupils. These teachers also ensure their pupils are good at solving problems. They achieve this by providing activities that require pupils to blend knowledge and skills developed in a range of subjects. They routinely ask very good questions that force pupils to think deeply about things. They create many opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas and justify their opinions. This helps pupils to develop their listening and speaking skills, which supports their good literacy development.
- Teaching assistants make a strong and valuable contribution to the achievement and well-being of pupils. They receive good training and are well led. Teaching assistants are very clear about their roles. They accept responsibility well and make a strong contribution to the high-quality provision in this school.
- The curriculum is carefully developed, ensuring pupils are involved in a broad range of subjects, topics and experiences. Learning activities are carefully planned to capture pupils' interest and motivate them.
- There is a good range of clubs and programme of activities and visits that enrich the curriculum. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. Pupils respond very positively to the expectations of the school, which promote British values of respect and tolerance. Pupils are taught to take responsibility for their actions and how to take care of themselves and others.
- The combination of high-quality teaching and an interesting curriculum ensures pupils enjoy learning at Light Oaks.
- Over recent years, pupils' writing skills have been strong. Current pupils continue to write well. There has been a review of how teachers teach writing, which has increased the amount of writing that pupils produce and

added to their enjoyment of writing. Pupils' skills in reading are similarly strong. Leaders are currently introducing a new reading scheme which uses more up-to-date themes. Pupils who find reading difficult are well supported to catch up through individual and small-group work. Previously, in mathematics, the most-able pupils have not progressed as quickly as other ability groups. This has been identified by you and school leaders. Alterations have been introduced to the way mathematics is taught. There are now more opportunities to apply mathematics in practical situations and pupils are given more time to really master mathematical skills before moving on. Currently, the most-able pupils in mathematics are achieving well.

- Expert and well-targeted support ensures pupils who join the school with low levels of attainment progress particularly well over all subjects. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disability are similarly well supported and successful.
- The additional funding to support the education of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is well spent by the school. In the recent past there was a gap in performance when comparing the achievement of these pupils and others in the school. Concerted efforts to improve their performance have resulted in any gaps in achievement being reduced and they are now negligible. However, disadvantaged pupils still do not attend as well as other pupils.
- Overall, pupils make good progress throughout all years and across subjects.
- Most pupils have a very positive approach to their learning and enjoy attending school. However the percentage of pupils who are persistently absent is higher than the national average. Staff are now working more closely with families to improve the attendance of these pupils. Despite some individual successes, attendance still needs to improve.
- In general pupils' behaviour around the school and in classes continues to be outstanding. Pupils work and play together harmoniously. They are very respectful of each other and of adults.
- A very large proportion of those parents who expressed a view said that they are happy with all aspects of the school and the education their children receive. They say their children are safe. The pupils themselves say they feel very safe. Pupils say there is no bullying in the school. They also say any name-calling or teasing is quickly and effectively dealt with by teachers. Staff members who expressed a view through the inspection survey are also very supportive of the school. All agreed strongly that the school was well led and managed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that a greater proportion of pupils make more rapid progress than is expected of them for their age by:

- continuing to improve the confidence and self-esteem of pupils who have low aspirations
- working with parents of those pupils who do not attend well, to reduce persistent absenteeism.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Salford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Neil Mackenzie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and another senior leader, groups of pupils and five members of the governing body. I met with a group of teachers. Documents were scrutinised, including: attendance records; safeguarding checks; logs of pupils' behaviour and records of checks on the quality of teaching. I also visited classrooms with you to speak to pupils, look at their books and observe their learning. I visited an assembly. I took account of 25 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). I also took account of a survey completed by 25 members of staff, your recent parental survey and a survey completed by 75 of your pupils. I had telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and your school improvement partner.