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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Miss Lisa Thelwell
Headteacher
Light Oaks Infant School
Lancaster Road
Salford
Greater Manchester
M6 8LU

Dear Miss Thelwell

Short inspection of Light Oaks Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 21 September 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education provided by the school since the last inspection in 2012. Your actions to strengthen the senior leadership team through the appointment of a new deputy headteacher and an early years leader have been effective in enhancing the capacity for further improvement.

Improvements have been made with regard to the two areas identified for development in May 2012. Continued improvements to the quality of outdoor learning spaces have been brought about by the dynamic leadership of your newly appointed early years leader. This means that children in the Nursery and the Reception classes have a stimulating, interesting and safe environment in which to develop their knowledge and skills. Improvements to the way in which you track the progress and attainment of pupils in all curriculum subjects, in addition to English and mathematics, ensure that you and your staff have a clear and accurate picture of pupils' achievement.

The pride you have in the school is shared by staff and governors. A caring ethos is evident; you aim to nurture the development of all pupils. Parents with whom I spoke and those who completed the online questionnaire have overwhelming praise for the school for its level of care and the impact it has on their children's learning. One parent stated that reports sent home show that teachers know children as well as they do themselves, while another was keen to praise the individual support put in place through the pupil premium grant that had helped their child succeed.

Your accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses has allowed you to respond effectively to the different needs brought about by the changes in your pupil population. Increasing numbers of parents of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities choose your school. Your actions to train staff and develop the resources available to them, including employing specialists in speech therapy, mean that these pupils make good progress from their starting points.

You have rightly identified that pupils' attendance is an important issue for your school. Published attendance figures show that the level of pupils' absence is above the national average, and in particular, some pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not attend as regularly as their peers. The school carefully records the non-attendance of a few children who appear to have left the school and so are designated as missing education. Leaders ensure that appropriate authorities are quickly notified of any pupils designated as missing education so that appropriate information is shared to help identify their location. You are ambitious to ensure that all children attend school as often as possible and have taken effective actions to reduce absenteeism. Your learning mentor, appointed since the last inspection, has developed good relationships with parents. This allows them to provide appropriate support and encouragement to help parents to overcome difficulties in getting their children to school. The frequent, colour-coded letters you send home reinforce with parents the need for children to be at school to learn. The robust pursuit of parents who do not get their children to school often enough has improved the attendance of pupils who were persistently missing school. Consequently, attendance is improving rapidly and is close to the national average for pupils of statutory school age.

Your use of the small amount of pupil premium funding received by the school has been effective in supporting disadvantaged pupils to make good progress from their starting points. Additional staff in classrooms, particularly in the early years, ensure that disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most able, receive appropriate support and challenge to make good progress from their starting points. Speech and language therapy helps pupils to develop their communication skills. Additional resources and training for staff, including in helping pupils to master skills in mathematics, ensures that most-able pupils regularly receive appropriately challenging work in lessons. Senior leaders carefully monitor the use of the pupil premium grant and are ambitious to diminish further the differences in attainment between the disadvantaged and other pupils nationally. Consequently, leaders have implemented a review of the current use of the funding and its impact so as to assess and inform the school's new pupil premium strategy.

Governors are committed to the continued improvement of the school and regularly receive appropriate information about pupils' progress and other priorities such as attendance. However, sometimes governors do not rigorously probe leaders' information to have an in-depth understanding of the impact of actions. Governors have not ensured that the information required on the school's website is always up to date.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that statutory checks are carried out on the suitability of staff. Leaders have developed an ethos of safety and security that closely follows the most recent statutory guidance and is manifested in a secure and caring environment in which children are happy. Pupils say they feel safe and that teachers help them. They feel confident to talk with staff and willingly engage with visitors. Pupils, even from a young age, are developing their confidence about how to stay safe in the community and online because of the teaching they receive. They say that bullying is rare and that any naughty behaviour is quickly dealt with by staff at all levels.

Inspection findings

- You and your senior leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement because of your rigorous monitoring. As a result, your school development plan contains the appropriate priorities for further improvement. Your actions have been well targeted to bring about improvement in the quality of teaching and the ability of the school to meet the more demanding needs of its changing pupil population. Consequently, pupils' achievement, particularly in the early years and phonics, has shown sustained improvement. You also recognise, because of your candid evaluations, what further action is necessary, particularly to enhance the improvements made to pupils' attendance and to improve the systems used to record this.
- You are beginning to share your effective practice with other schools. Local schools have made appointments to visit your school to see the good practice in early years and your records of pupils' achievements, developed by early years staff, are shared with other schools.
- Governors are well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development through the information they receive. However, governors sometimes do not probe and challenge leaders deeply enough to ensure their sharp understanding of the impact on groups. Governors have not ensured that the school's website is always updated to include all the required information.
- In 2015, overall attendance was close to the national average and improving. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was in the lowest 10% of that seen in schools nationally. You recognised this as unacceptable and are taking appropriate steps to address this, including the robust challenge to those parents whose children do not attend regularly or who request holidays in term time. Your detailed analysis of attendance highlights that a number of pupils leave the school without notice or forwarding addresses; these pupils are often disadvantaged. These absences have a significant negative impact on your overall and persistent attendance figures. You correctly ensure that the appropriate authorities are alerted swiftly to the absences of these pupils and follow up your notifications assiduously to ensure that the correct attention is given to them.

- You have worked well with external authorities to safeguard and ensure the well-being of all vulnerable groups.
- In 2015, pupils achieved well in the end of key stage 1 statutory assessments. Results were in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The small proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the cohort did not do as well as pupils nationally. The difference in their attainment figures widened for the first time in three years. However, school-based tracking information and work in books shows that these pupils made good progress from their starting points, many of which were low. The small numbers of most-able disadvantaged pupils achieved well and made good progress due to the effective teaching they received.
- In the Year 1 phonics check in 2015, the pupils continued the school's trend of improving outcomes. The proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the expected standard was above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils exceeded the outcomes for their peers and that seen for other pupils nationally. This has been brought about by your prioritisation of the development of high-quality phonics teaching by all staff that ensures that pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- The outcomes for early years pupils continue to improve over time because of improving teaching and leadership in this area. Consequently, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development in the early years foundation stage profile was above the 2015 national figure in 2016. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving a good level of development has risen rapidly in the last three years, from being less than half the national average for other pupils nationally in 2013 to being above that seen for other pupils nationally in 2015.
- The quality of teaching continues to improve. Teachers have a good understanding of the achievement of pupils because of accurate day-to-day assessment and regular challenge from leaders through pupil progress meetings. Teachers give appropriate guidance to pupils about how to improve their knowledge and skills. They plan sequences of lessons which appropriately challenge pupils, including those who are most able.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils in all groups, including the disadvantaged and the most able. They use questioning well to probe pupils' understanding and develop their abilities to talk about their learning without fear of failure. As a result, pupils confidently explain what they are doing and how it is helping them to learn.
- Pupils in all groups, including the least able and the most able disadvantaged pupils, read widely and often and develop a love of books. Pupils speak fondly of their favourite authors and are able to recount their stories. Books are changed frequently and matched well to the pupils' abilities. It is clear when listening to readers that they draw effectively upon their embedded phonics skills to help them read unfamiliar words.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors sharpen their evaluative skills to understand better the impact of

- leaders' actions such as those to improve attendance
- the school's website is regularly checked to ensure that information is up to date
 - the outcomes of the internal review of the pupil premium are used effectively to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 to diminish the difference in their attainment with other pupils nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

John Nixon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher as well as other senior leaders and teaching staff, the chair of the governing body and another governor. I also met with the local authority's adviser linked with the school. I spoke with pupils during lessons and around the school. I took account of the written responses from parents and the information contained within responses to the online questionnaires for pupils, parents and staff. I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and looked at their work in books. I reviewed information about pupils' progress, attainment and attendance. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and action plans and looked at safeguarding, including evaluating the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep children safe, recruitment checks and record-keeping.