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Mrs Jacqui Kirwan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Kirwan

Short inspection of Lincoln Manor Leas Infants School

Following my visit to the school on 17 March 2017, 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. It is a calm, safe and purposeful place where children's learning, happiness and welfare are put first. You and your deputy headteacher work to ensure high expectations for all pupils, and are not prepared to accept teaching which does not result in pupils making swift progress.

Staff I met during my visit were keen to tell me how proud they are to be part of the school team, how you take note of their ideas and, regardless of their role, how they work closely together. They exchange information, ensure that their approach is consistent and share ideas to make lessons exciting and effective. They enjoy coming to work each day and say that you treat them with respect. Staff know pupils very well and plan work which is matched appropriately to their needs. You support staff in helping you write the school's development plan, which has ambitious targets to drive up achievement for pupils. Staff see how the priorities in this plan come from your assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which you have judged from a wide range of evidence. The priorities in the plan then form the basis for targets within each staff member's appraisal. The systems for managing the performance of staff are effective because their targets are precise and you provide them with training to improve their skills and confidence.

Pupils, historically, have left the school with levels of attainment at least in line with others nationally. Last year, although the proportions of pupils who met the expected standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science were broadly in line with the national average, significantly lower proportions achieved a greater depth of understanding. Pupils' achievement was not as high in 2016 because the quality of teaching for some of these pupils was not consistently good over time. You have taken effective steps to address this. As a result, all groups of pupils across the school are now making good progress once again.

Classrooms are orderly and positive places where I saw no disruption or disengagement from learning whatsoever. Pupils are keen to work, listen well, follow instructions, concentrate for long periods and try their best. Staff promote pupils' independence by teaching them new skills and then giving them opportunities to apply these in different ways for themselves. Pupils are improving their skills effectively in reading, mathematics and writing. However, their progress in writing is not fast enough because, although their overall skills in spelling are improving, teachers are not making sure that pupils take care to spell correctly when they write longer pieces of work.

You have attended well to all the areas inspectors asked to improve at the last inspection. Staff in the early years now plan together so that they give matching lessons to children in both classes. There are many daily opportunities for children to explore, investigate and solve problems. Staff ask open-ended and effective questions to make children think, such as 'what sort of other ways could you join paper together, and which would be good?' when teaching children how to use a stapler. Throughout the school, staff check pupils understand what they have been asked to do. They record pupils' progress effectively and then use their observations to plan challenging work that will move pupils on further. Pupils I met told me that the school's system of guidance helps them because they understand which things they need to improve most.

The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well, with governors fully understanding their strategic role. They ensure that pupils are safe and maintain the school budget effectively. They also hold you and senior leaders to account effectively overall, so that pupils make good progress. Governors ensure that the pupil premium funding is spent well overall and that disadvantaged pupils who need to catch up are provided with effective support. However, you do not give them enough information about how you spend the pupil premium to meet the needs of the most able disadvantaged pupils. Governors I met during my visit were not sure precisely how much progress this group of pupils were making.

Although pupils' overall attendance is high, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been considerably below the national average for the past two years. Although the absence of these pupils has reduced, you agree that many of them still do not attend as regularly as they need to and that you need to do further work so that they are in school to learn each day, unless there is a genuine or exceptional reason.

Parents I met at the end of the day, and those who gave their views via Parent View, unanimously gave positive views of the school and its leadership. As one parent commented, 'I can't fault this school. Pastorally and academically, staff do a fantastic job.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that pupils are kept safe in school by seeing that all staff are well trained in safeguarding, including in areas of current concern, such as extremism. As a result, staff have a thorough knowledge of the warning signs of potential abuse and understand their need to be continually vigilant for any indications of harm to a pupil. You and your deputy headteacher, who is the school's designated lead teacher for safeguarding, ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Pupils I met during my visit explained how staff teach them how to stay safe from things such as fire, roads and strangers. They also told me that, if they saw something which worried them on a computer, they knew that they should tell an adult they trusted straight away. Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They explained how everyone behaves well and that staff are very kind, helping them if they are worried or if anyone falls out.

Inspection findings

- Children enter the Reception classes with overall levels of skills that are typical for children of the same age. However, their skills in communication and language, physical development, literacy and mathematics are often below this. However, pupils' work I saw during my visits shows that all groups of pupils make good progress from their starting points. Because a considerable number of children in last year's cohort joined later in the school year and did not have sufficient time to catch up, the proportion of pupils who attained a good level of development fell in 2016. However, the proportion nevertheless remained above the national average, which has been the case for the past three years.
- The proportion of pupils who pass the Year 1 phonics screening check is in line with the national average. This year, leaders have begun to provide support earlier in the school year to any pupils who need to catch up. Pupils are acquiring a good phonics knowledge, making plausible attempts to spell when writing sentences such as, 'One daie a farmer livd in a wild hous'.
- However, while pupils can spell well when writing individual words and sometimes in short sentences, teachers do not teach pupils sufficiently well so that pupils remember to spell correctly when they write longer pieces.
- Staff are helping those pupils with lower prior ability to catch up. For example, in writing, these pupils are improving their punctuation and writing with greater confidence. Pupils of typical ability are writing sentences, using capital letters and full stops with increasing accuracy.
- The most able pupils are making good progress because staff give them work that is matched appropriately to their ability, and pupils say that they enjoy this

because it is so difficult. I saw how, in mathematics, teachers were requiring the most able pupils in Year 1 to find answers to more complex problem-solving sums without the apparatus provided to their classmates. They were given tasks that were still more challenging once they had shown that they had learned to do this.

- While the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is improving over time, it remains below the national average. Not enough of these pupils attend as frequently as they should and, as a result, they cannot learn as quickly as they need to.
- The pupil premium is being well spent overall to ensure that most of the disadvantaged pupils make accelerated progress from their starting points. For example, in the Reception Year, children who enter the school unable to write recognisable letters are supported so that they learn to do this quickly and, by approximately halfway through the year, they are able to put sounds together to start to spell.
- You do not give governors sufficient information about what staff are doing to help the most able disadvantaged pupils. This means that they cannot monitor whether the progress of these pupils is rapid, nor then hold you to account if these pupils are not attaining as highly as they should over time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers help pupils to apply their spelling skills more accurately in their writing
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils continues to improve so that it is broadly in line with the national average for all pupils
- leaders supply governors with sufficient information about the provision for the most able disadvantaged pupils, so that governors are able to check that these pupils' progress accelerates over time and that they attain a greater depth of understanding by the time they leave the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you and shared my key lines of enquiry. I also met with the deputy headteacher, who is leader for the early years, as well as members of the governing body. I met with parents at the end of the school day. I considered the responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the school's most recent questionnaire to parents. We visited classes in all key stages in the school, spending a short time in each. I looked at an extensive sample of pupils' work, much of it with you. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement, information on how the pupil premium is spent and a number of policy documents, including those for child protection. I examined the school's website to check that it complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and met with a group of them at breaktime. I met staff and discussed with them their opinions of the school and its leadership.