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6 July 2018

Mrs Lindsay Linning
Executive Headteacher
Oakdale Infants' School
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Dear Mrs Linning

Short inspection of Oakdale Infants' School

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 2018, 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Oakdale Infants' is a thoroughly good school. Since taking the helm in January 2016, you and the associate headteacher have made positive changes. You have developed an effective senior leadership team that works collaboratively to provide clear strategic direction. Leaders have ensured that the school continues to improve.

Senior leaders provide staff with effective support. They guide and enable teachers to deliver improved outcomes for children. In the early years and across key stage 1, children are making good progress in most subject areas. However, you recognise that there is more work to do because not all teachers routinely plan challenging activities.

Governors know the school well, and share and support your ambition for pupils. They have worked effectively with you to bring about continued and sustainable improvements. Together, you have invested in the curriculum, for example by promoting new experiences in art and music. The introduction of philosophy has resulted in greater opportunities for pupils to explore and develop their critical thinking. Nevertheless, you acknowledge that there is room in the wider curriculum to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding of new subject-specific concepts.

You have the full support of the local authority. You also have the overwhelming

support of parents and carers. They feel that the school supports them well and responds to their concerns swiftly. Pupils at the school are polite and well mannered; they are confident and happy. They conduct themselves around the school extremely well.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. A strong culture of vigilance and support ensures that children are helped to keep safe and secure. Safeguarding concerns are dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner. Staff training is up to date and records are kept in good order.

Leaders share information with parents and the appropriate external agencies. Children said that they feel safe and know to whom they would speak if they had any worries. Classroom activities and assemblies communicate the importance of safety to all children. Parents agree that their children are safe and well looked after. Governors oversee all safeguarding arrangement and check to see that all procedures are robust.

Inspection findings

- We first focused on how leaders and managers ensure that children are challenged. This is because this was an area for improvement from the school's previous inspection. Leaders had also identified challenge in the classroom as a school development priority. We looked at a range of evidence sources, including visits to classrooms and scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Greater challenge is being provided by teachers because they have increased understanding about pupils' capabilities. This has been achieved through regular and effective training and coaching opportunities.
- Alongside this, we identified that some children are developing improved independent thinking skills. For example, in the Nursery, we observed children learning about transport and travel. They were articulate in recalling what they had learned. They independently chose their preferred vehicle and went on to produce colourful artwork using cars to paint tyre tracks. Some children were able to justify their choices. However, leaders acknowledge that there are missed opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding. This is particularly the case for the most able disadvantaged children, some of whom have very diverse needs.
- We next focused on how leaders have improved phonics outcomes across the school. Key stage 1 results in 2016 and 2017 showed that children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities were not achieving as well as the other children. We observed reading sessions and I looked at assessment data and spoke with children and adults.
- You told me that the school had identified phonics as a priority following the 2016 results. Consequently, investment was made in high-quality training. This has improved the consistency of approach in teaching phonics. Leaders have invested in a range of new books so that children are better able to practise their skills. As a result, the phonics screening checks have improved significantly and

are now above national averages. Pupils show confidence in conversation and are able to use various phonics strategies to tackle new and unfamiliar words.

- Finally, we focused on how leaders and managers ensure that the curriculum offers a deep and broad educational experience. We visited classrooms together and looked at evidence including pupils' work.
- We found that the school's curriculum has been redesigned to broaden children's experiences and improve knowledge acquisition. For example, in a Year 1 art lesson, children learned about Van Gogh's sunflower and produced their own interpretation of the artist's work. Similarly, in history, children produced Second World War propaganda posters and wrote their own version of war stories.
- However, to build on recent gains in the curriculum, we agreed that more work is required to deepen children's understanding of new concepts. In some classrooms, disadvantaged children lacked background knowledge and did not always fully grasp the concept of what they were learning. In addition, they were not always able to apply new words or phrases correctly in wider contexts.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum provides opportunities for children to deepen their understanding of new concepts and ideas
- teachers provide challenging activities that take into account the starting points of disadvantaged children.

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

Yours sincerely

Maureen Okoye
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We visited most classes together. I held meetings with you, the associate headteacher and other school leaders to evaluate the impact of the school's work. I met with the chair of governors, the safeguarding governor and a representative from the local authority. I spoke with a small group of parents in the playground. I reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and information about pupils' progress and attendance. The school's single central record of staff recruitment checks and a range of safeguarding documentation were also reviewed. I considered the 127 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View and the 28 responses from staff to the staff survey.