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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Jill Harrold
Headteacher
Catherine Infant School
Ulverscroft Road
Leicester
Leicestershire
LE4 6BY

Dear Mrs Harrold

Short inspection of Catherine Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

Based on the evidence gathered during the inspection, the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvements in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection.

Catherine Infant School is a larger than average inner-city school. It is a vibrant, welcoming school and its motto states 'We are all stars.' You and your staff work hard to ensure that the pupils rightly believe that they are. Your calm, purposeful and determined leadership has resulted in a cohesive team. This provides pupils with a well-rounded education in a nurturing environment. Since your appointment in September 2016 you have successfully led improvements to the quality of teaching and improved pupils' achievement. Through a culture of high expectations, you and your deputy headteacher have skilfully developed a strong and reflective senior management team and team of middle leaders. This has resulted in effective leadership across the school. You are passionate about raising academic achievement and providing a supportive and caring environment which enables all pupils to flourish.

Parents say that their children enjoy coming to school. They say that the staff are kind, caring and approachable. As one parent explained, 'I liked the way they helped me to learn how they teach phonics, so I can help my child' Another parent commented, 'My daughter loves school, she prefers it to the holidays!'

Leaders have accurately evaluated the school's strengths and areas for development, they have a clear plan for improvement and work effectively to address weaknesses. Leaders

make frequent checks on the quality of teaching and provide training and support for staff where needed. You hold teachers rigorously to account for the progress their pupils are making. This sharp focus on securing good-quality teaching throughout the school is having a strong impact on pupils' achievement.

Pupils are highly motivated and take pride in their work. Overall they make good progress from their starting points. At the end of key stage 1 in 2017 the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standards in the national standard assessment tests in reading and writing was in line with national figures, and above for maths. For those pupils achieving greater depth, it was above the national figures in reading, writing and maths. Phonics is a strength of the school and pupils at the end of Year 1 achieved above the national expectations.

You have worked successfully to raise standards in reading by fostering a love and passion for books, including bringing them alive through drama, dance and song. This was evident in the pupils' absolute joy when performing the play 'Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory'. During the play the pupils brimmed with pride and confidence in front of their parents and carers. Pupils told me about their favourite books and spoke animatedly about the wide range of literary genres they experience, including non-fiction. One boy had been inspired by his history topic work and excitedly told me he found out 'King Richard III of England had a son called Edward.'

The curriculum has been planned thoughtfully. It is broad and balanced and inspires pupils to learn. It provides engaging topics and places a high emphasis on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. British values are threaded through all aspects of school life, including, acceptance, respect, tolerance and kindness. There are a wealth of diverse cultures and languages within the school and surrounding community. This is celebrated and harnessed to enrich pupils' lives. The staff promote this ethos with bright, inviting displays in and around their classrooms. These help the pupils with their learning and celebrate their work in a wide range of subjects, such as art, music and science.

You invite parents to attend workshops, to share what the pupils are doing in school. You provide parents who cannot readily access the English language with parent workshops in home languages and interpreters at parent events to make sure that they feel included and part of the school.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are a strength of the school. They are polite, well-mannered and play happily together. Pupils take pride in their work and this was evident in their work books. They enjoy doing homework projects. Pupils had made some beautiful models of a church and a temple. Talking to the pupils was a delight. They were talkative and full of stories of why they liked school. Pupils said that they like coming to school, because their teachers are kind and it is fun. One pupil told me, 'It doesn't matter if you make a mistake; that's how you learn.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leaders and members of the governing body have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding and the well-being of pupils are the utmost

priority. The passion you and the chair of the governing body have for the welfare of the pupils in your care has driven the culture within the school. You have ensured that robust systems and procedures are in place. There is effective training for staff and they are aware of the latest safeguarding guidance. Records are detailed and secure. You, your leaders and other staff know individual pupils and families well. You liaise with external agencies and actively seek help for families. Parents said that they felt that they could come and talk to you or other members of staff if they had a concern. You employ an education welfare officer who works very closely with the senior management team and works actively to support families. You provide parent training for e-safety. Pupils said that they feel safe and know that if there is ever a problem, they can always trust the teachers and support staff to listen and to help them. They knew how to stay safe on the computer, and how to keep safe on the road

Inspection findings

- The previous inspection report in November 2014 stated that members of the governing body must develop the skills to check how well the school is doing and to challenge leaders to improve it. Members of the governing body are highly committed to the school and work hard to promote its vision and ethos. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through monitoring visits to school, meetings with school leaders and staff, the scrutiny of assessment data and a range of leadership reports. The school works within an established and effective collaboration with two other schools through which members of the governing body have been able to share professional expertise to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of their role. Governors have worked in a cohesive and determined way to support the school to address specific weaknesses. They hold you and your staff to account to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- In the early years the leadership has a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development, they ensure that weaknesses are being addressed and that standards are improving. Children make good progress from their starting points. There are high expectations and warm positive relationships. The classroom settings are engaging and planned carefully to promote children's learning. As a result, children are motivated and spend long periods of time on activities. In the outside environment there was a wide range of planned activities. Teaching assistants were effectively guiding singing and action games for a small group of children, focusing on language development. One child proudly showed me his beautifully detailed map of how to get to the seaside. The outdoor environment did not, however, promote literacy and numeracy as effectively as the indoors, and there were few opportunities for the children to experience nature first hand. Parts of the surrounding garden area to the outdoor area are tired and unkempt and there is little natural greenery for the children to experience and explore.
- For the whole school, you have just successfully accessed funding through the National Lottery Awards for All with the stated intention of rejuvenating the outdoor space, including encouraging all pupils and families to explore nature in an urban environment.
- Overall absence and persistent absence has been consistently above the national average for the past three years. Leaders have worked hard to improve attendance at school. An attendance officer works closely with specific families to facilitate improved attendance and welfare. You have started a breakfast club to encourage pupils to arrive

early to school. Members of the governing body and of the leadership team stress to parents the value of regular attendance through positive parent meetings, and you also have individual meetings with families. When appropriate, fixed penalties are awarded. Weekly rewards and celebrations for good attendance are presented in assembly. As a result, overall absence has reduced this year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there are further improvements made to the early years outdoor environment to enrich the children's experiences and to enable them to explore and develop an understanding of the natural world
- they continue the work to raise attendance to be in line with national average.

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

Yours sincerely

Lindsay Alldis
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other leaders and members of the governing body to discuss the school's progress since the last inspection. I also spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority. I met with groups of parents at the beginning of the school day. I spoke with pupils informally during the day and held a meeting with a group of pupils and listened to several individual pupils read. I scrutinised a wide range of information, including policies and records relating to safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation, its plans for improvement and its review of spending on the pupil premium and the PE and sport premium. I looked at assessment information for current and previous year groups. I took note of the view of the three responses to the online survey parent view, and the school's own parent questionnaire responses. I also analysed the thirty responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. Together, we conducted a focused walk around the whole school and observed learning in several classes.