

23 July 2019

Mrs Lindsay Linning and Ms Carley Smith
Executive Headteacher and Head of School
Oakdale Junior School
Oakdale Road
Redbridge
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Dear Mrs Linning and Ms Smith

Short inspection of Oakdale Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 2019, 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the leadership team have an accurate and honest understanding of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. From this, you have been able to plan and implement effective strategies that have underpinned the steady improvement in pupils' outcomes, most notably in writing.

The recent hard federation with the infant school has been well managed and has created many opportunities for pupils, families, staff and governors. Staff respond well to guidance from senior leaders. Speaking with me, and through their responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff views, staff said that you and other senior colleagues are supportive. They appreciate the opportunities that you give them to help improve the quality of their teaching and leadership, which they feel has been further enhanced since federation.

You have undertaken a great deal of work on pupils' behaviour, including how well pupils transfer from the infant school to the junior school – an area for improvement arising from the last inspection. A consistent behaviour charter between the two schools and carefully planned transition work with the infant school have ensured that pupils settle quickly. Transition now starts from Reception and allows pupils to experience the junior school curriculum. They receive specialist art teaching and outdoor activities and cycling proficiency training, and join in with playtimes and lunchtimes throughout the year.

As a result, behaviour and relationships are strong. Pupils show respect for adults and peers alike and learning in lessons starts promptly.

You have continued to ensure that the school is a nurturing, welcoming and caring environment. The high-quality nurture provision supports pupils with a variety of needs (for example, those experiencing family breakdown or bereavement), and pupils who are moving on to secondary school. You provide a range of therapeutic approaches that benefit pupils and staff alike. You have developed a culture of openness that supports well-being. Pupils who access the nurture provision are supported to recognise, articulate and explain their feelings as well as recognise different emotions in others.

Parents and carers are very positive about the school and your leadership. One parent stated that 'Oakdale Junior School has a great sense of community about it. It is a very nurturing school. The range of opportunities and experiences that my child takes part in is fantastic. He is acquiring lots of life skills as well as academic ones.' This was typical of the many positive comments from parents.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and fit for purpose. Pre-employment checks on adults working at the school meet statutory requirements. All staff have regular and appropriate training. Staff spoken to during the inspection know how to respond to any concerns should they arise. Records are well organised and show that referrals are handled in a timely manner. Leaders, including governors, hold regular meetings to check safeguarding compliancy and caseload. This enables the school to provide the right level of support in a timely manner, leading to swift support for those who need it.

Leaders understand well the challenges faced by pupils and have designed a safeguarding curriculum in response to relevant issues such as confronting stereotypes, understanding the risks of radicalisation and gang culture, and staying safe online. The vast majority of parents and pupils who responded to the online surveys agreed that children feel safe at school, and that behaviour is good and pupils are well looked after. Pupils I spoke to during the inspection said that they felt safe and could identify a number of adults they could speak to if they had any concerns.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed three lines of enquiry. The first focused on the actions leaders have taken to improve pupils' writing. This was because, in 2018, the progress of Year 6 pupils during key stage 2 was significantly above the national average. Therefore, I considered whether this positive picture was evident for current pupils.
- Leaders and teachers have the highest expectations and aspirations for pupils' writing. A range of exciting experiences, including visits, visitors, drama and access to artefacts and high-quality texts, provide an exciting stimulus for

writing. Visits to lessons and a review of pupils' work across different year groups showed that pupils write often, for different purposes and at length, maintaining writing of a consistently high quality. Pupils across the school are motivated, attain well and make strong progress in writing. They take pride in their work and as pupils move from one year to the next, their writing stamina increases, and their writing improves in maturity and technical accuracy.

- Teachers do not always, however, ensure that all pupils have understood the examples of successful writing they have been shown. This sometimes results in pupils not understanding what is expected of them and, therefore, achieving less well than they could.
- The second line of enquiry focused on the actions taken by leaders to ensure that pupils' attendance is rising, including for those pupils who are persistently absent. This was because pupils' attendance has risen over time and levels of persistent absence have decreased sharply over recent years. Therefore, I considered the reasons for leaders' success in this aspect of their work. Leaders, including governors, have rightly prioritised improving attendance and have been robust in developing systems that challenge low attendance and support families in addressing this issue.
- First-day phone calls, challenging unnecessary appointments and term-time leave, meetings with parents, home visits, penalty notices and rewards for improved attendance have all secured an improvement in this area. As a result, attendance is now higher than the national average and rates of persistent absence much lower than those found nationally. Although levels of persistent absence have improved substantially overall, the school accepts that, for some families, this is still an area of priority.
- The final line of enquiry focused on the actions leaders have taken to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. This was because, over time, these pupils have made less progress in reading and mathematics than other pupils.
- Leaders, including governors, have focused on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils have access to a broad range of rich experiences that allow them to develop socially, emotionally and academically.
- Pupils who met with me during the inspection were motivated readers who read widely, often and confidently to a range of audiences. They could name a range of authors and their works and could describe what skills are required to be a successful reader. The curriculum enables pupils to apply their reading skills when conducting research in subjects other than English. On occasion, however, books were not well matched to pupils' reading ability and this hampered both their understanding and enjoyment of the text.
- A review of disadvantaged pupils' work in mathematics showed that they are supported to make progress because the curriculum is well planned and takes into account their needs. Pupils rehearse a range of mathematical skills before applying them when solving increasingly complex problems, justifying and explaining their reasoning with confidence. There were, however, some inaccuracies in pupils' mathematical drawings that were not addressed. For some pupils, this led to misconceptions being repeated.

- Although there is an extensive range of strategies and interventions designed to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, leaders acknowledge that analysis of their work needs to be more precise so that they can identify and prioritise strategies that make the most significant difference.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them so that misconceptions are addressed and all pupils make the progress of which they are capable
- analysis and evaluation of strategies and interventions designed to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are precise
- the robust initiatives designed to reduce persistent absenteeism and improve attendance continue to be embedded to ensure that all pupils at risk of low attendance are supported in attending school regularly as for some families this is still an area of priority.

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

Nick Turvey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection began with a discussion of your self-evaluation and we agreed the key lines of enquiry. Together we visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. I spoke with pupils about their reading and learning and how the school helps to keep them safe. Meetings were held with a group of staff, including those responsible for leading safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

I met representatives of the governing body and local authority. I reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan and single central record of employment checks. I also considered responses to the staff survey, pupil survey and Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.