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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Jacqui Kearney
Headteacher
Larchfield Primary and Nursery School
Bargeman Road
Maidenhead
Berkshire
SL6 2SG

Dear Mrs Kearney

Short inspection of Larchfield Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 26 March 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There has been much instability in the leadership of the school since June 2015. You joined the school as headteacher in September 2017, at the same time as a new deputy headteacher, bursar, inclusion leader and five teachers. In a one-form entry school, this was a significant change in staffing. You wasted no time in rallying your staff, building them into the strong, collaborative team that they now are. Staff share your vision that 'children are central to all that we do'. You are united in your goals for the school. All staff who responded to the Ofsted staff questionnaire are proud to work at the school and morale is high.

On appointment, you identified rapidly what improvements were needed. Together with your deputy headteacher, you have taken swift and effective action to improve provision across the school. Self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders and governors know exactly what needs to be done next. The local authority provides you with effective support in order to raise standards further. You have put the school back into the hearts of the community. As one parent commented, summing up the views of many, 'It is clear that the headteacher strives to make this school as great as possible.' Leaders' capacity to continue improving the school is clear to see.

You have ensured that pupils now have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. You are rightly proud of the physical education provision that the pupils receive. Pupils have the opportunity to be involved in many different sports and competitions, including cricket, tag rugby and dance. During the inspection, I observed skilled badminton coaching. As a result, the Year 1 pupils understood

exactly how to hold a racquet and shuttlecock in order to serve. The curriculum is enriched through a range of extra-curricular activities such as archery, fencing, computing and choir.

Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their school. 'Pride in the badge' runs deep at Larchfield. Pupils are proud to attend the school and are proud of the work they produce. Presentation is of a high quality. Pupils love many aspects of school life, including their daily mile run, hot chocolate reward time and science experiments. They told me that behaviour is mainly good, other children are friendly and teachers are 'really, really helpful'. Parents, too, are proud of their local school. They spoke to me about how their children are always smiling. As one parent wrote, 'My child is very happy to be here and we are part of a wonderful school family.'

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the teaching of mathematics, You and your staff have successfully addressed this. In 2018 at the end of key stage 2, the attainment of pupils was in line with the national average at the expected standard. In addition, a higher-than-national-average proportion of pupils exceeded the expected standard. However, current performance information and work in current pupils' books show that the most able pupils are not always challenged enough in their mathematics throughout the school.

Leaders were also asked to enrich the outdoor learning opportunities for children in the early years. They have established outdoor classrooms that enable children to enjoy their learning across all areas of the curriculum. Since your appointment, you have grown the Nursery so that more children can attend and benefit from the valuable provision that you offer.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors fulfil their statutory safeguarding duties well. You have established a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders are tenacious in their approach to ensuring that pupils and their families get the support that they need. Records are comprehensive and show that swift action is taken when necessary. Pre-employment checks demonstrate leaders' thorough action in ensuring the suitability of all staff and volunteers to work in the school. Safeguarding training is regular, and policies and procedures are fit for purpose. Adults understand their safeguarding responsibilities well.

The pupils that I spoke to during the inspection say that they feel safe in school. Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is. They said that bullying is 'extremely rare' at Larchfield and that 'teachers definitely try to sort it out'. The curriculum includes helpful advice on e-safety. Pupils know not to share personal information and to tell an adult if they are worried about something online.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that the focus for the inspection would be on: the teaching of mathematics; how effectively leaders are improving standards in reading, including phonics; and the effectiveness of the outdoor areas in the early years.

- The teaching of mathematics is effective and most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make strong progress. Pupils have a sound grounding in the basic skills needed to be successful in their learning. The mathematics curriculum provides a strong balance of problem-solving and reasoning. Pupils can apply their mathematics knowledge increasingly well to different contexts and different subject areas. For example, during my visit, pupils in Year 2 were using their knowledge of reading scales to help them read thermometers to measure the temperature of water. Nevertheless, leaders have high expectations and know that the rates of progress of the most able pupils in mathematics are not strong enough.
- Leaders have responded swiftly to the below-national-average attainment in reading at the end of key stage 2 in 2018. You have purchased a new reading scheme and a wide range of good-quality texts, which have created a culture of enjoyment of reading. Pupils confidently told me about their favourite books and authors including Roald Dahl, David Walliams and Rick Riordan. Teachers ensure that pupils have good reading habits. Pupils read regularly at home and at school.
- Teachers maximise opportunities to improve pupils' vocabulary and, as a result, pupils are ambitious with their word choices. Pupils also understand the development of character well. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson pupils were confidently discussing the changes in the personality of Macbeth once he had plotted to kill Banquo, showing a sound understanding of the plot structure and the necessary vocabulary.
- Teachers' assessment of reading is accurate. Any pupil who is not making the required progress is swiftly identified and support allocated. Nevertheless, evidence in pupils' books is limited in showing that they are using a wide range of comprehension skills.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check had been declining over the past few years. Since your appointment, you have taken very effective action to halt this decline, resulting in outcomes in line with national figures in 2018. Inspection evidence and current assessment information indicate that the teaching of phonics is effective.
- Leaders have effectively developed the use of the outdoor area in the early years since the last inspection. The outdoor-learning environment is organised and appealing. Staff ensure that there is a wide range of engaging activities available for children to explore and enjoy, often linked to the children's specific interests. As a result, children show great curiosity in the world around them and their physical development is well supported. Children access resources independently, configuring them for their play and solving problems together. Their oral communication skills are improving rapidly and relationships are strong. However, leaders do not make full use of the outdoor area to inspire children's writing. The progress that children are making in writing is not consistently strong, especially that of boys.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching consistently challenges the most able pupils in mathematics so that more pupils attain high standards by the end of key stages 1 and 2
- teachers give pupils more opportunities to use and apply a wider range of comprehension skills
- children in the early years make more progress in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss the school's effectiveness. We visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning, talk to pupils, and to look at their work. We looked at the quality of work in a range of pupils' books and I heard some pupils read. I considered 61 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments. I also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. Responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires were considered and I had a meeting with a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school.

I met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body, and also met with two representatives from the local authority. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of documents was examined, including the school's self-evaluation, school-improvement planning, attendance information, information about pupils' progress, and various policies. I also examined the school's website.