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Mrs Tracey Bowman
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Dear Mrs Bowman

Short inspection of The Lancaster School

Following my visit to the school on 30 November 2016, 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 September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your arrival at the school in January 2015, the speed of school improvement has increased. Your evaluation of the school's performance is accurate and this has enabled you to prioritise suitable actions to improve the school.

Leaders' and governors' ambitions for each pupil to achieve well in a caring and nurturing environment are epitomised in the school's motto, 'Success for today; preparation for tomorrow'. The school's reputation for offering high levels of pastoral support to pupils and their families has been strengthened by your renewed focus on academic excellence. Parents I spoke with feel that your shared role as executive headteacher with the local junior school is particularly positive in securing an effective transition for the pupils as they move between the schools from Year 2 to Year 3.

Working closely with the deputy headteacher, you have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. You have introduced a curriculum with topics that encourage boys' participation and learning while also appealing to the girls' interests. The current topic 'Toys' is a good example, with all pupils, but particularly the boys in Years 1 and 2, clearly motivated to read and write, often for extended periods. You have purchased a wide range of additional

reading books, with many new non-fiction titles designed to capture boys' interests. As a result of these actions, the progress and attainment for boys in the early years and key stage 1 are increasing over time.

You have focused the efforts of the family support worker and the school's attendance consultant on improving pupils' attendance. The school's procedures for first-day calling and third-day home visits are good examples of the importance you place on daily attendance to improve pupils' outcomes and to ensure their safety. Fortnightly updates on attendance rates in the school's newsletters and awards for excellent attendance ensure that parents and pupils are reminded of the importance of coming to school every day. However, you have not shied away from seeking prosecutions for the parents of particularly poor attenders. Attendance rates are gradually increasing. Absences are very accurately recorded. Levels of persistent absence are still higher than average, which reflects the impact of a few pupils with very poor attendance.

In 2016, the proportion of the most able disadvantaged Year 2 pupils achieving greater depth in their reading, writing and mathematics was well below that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. During the work scrutiny we undertook together, we identified that, in the majority of classes, pupils of different abilities often undertake the same tasks. Teachers are not adept enough at identifying the next steps in pupils' learning and this results in work that is often not challenging enough, particularly for the most able disadvantaged pupils. As a result, they do not make fast enough progress and their attainment over time is not as good as it should be.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. There are extensive records covering pupils' behaviour and incidents involving physical intervention. You analyse these records regularly, identifying and addressing any patterns and trends. You use this information to access external support for the small number of pupils who have additional behavioural or social needs. There is good evidence of the positive impact of this support on the behaviour of these pupils over time.

Leaders, governors and staff undertake regular training relevant to child protection and safeguarding issues, such as raising awareness of risks of extremism, child sexual exploitation and domestic violence. Governors are particularly vigilant and undertake unannounced spot checks to ensure that staff are putting their training into practice and that documents such as the single central record are accurate and up to date. Parents I spoke with feel assured that their children are safe and that school staff will deal with any concerns they or their children have, quickly and effectively.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors are united in their determination to provide pupils with an excellent education. Senior leaders have identified the actions needed to improve the school and governors hold them to account for the impact of these actions. Governors check the accuracy of the information they receive from the headteacher through a range of activities such as talking to pupils and looking at work in their books.
- Governors are increasingly adept at asking challenging questions of leaders. Governors' minutes provide good examples of probing questions, for example ensuring that additional funding through the pupil premium is well spent. Important procedures such as the management of teachers' performance are stringently monitored by governors and are effective in improving pupils' outcomes as a result.
- Leaders and governors place a high priority on the training and development of teachers and teaching assistants. The headteacher has forged strong links with other local schools and this has improved the quality of teaching and learning across the early years and key stage 1. Teachers share pupils' work with teachers from other schools and this ensures that assessments of pupils' progress and attainment are now much more accurate and reliable than was previously the case.
- Leaders use half-termly meetings to challenge teachers about individual pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers complete assessment records that highlight pupils who may be particularly vulnerable to underachievement. These pupils include boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This close monitoring of each pupil is ensuring that any drop in their performance is addressed quickly through well-directed additional support.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well catered for. The school's varied and inclusive curriculum is supported by a range of enrichment activities and visitors who provide strong examples of respect, tolerance and service to others. From the early years, children are taught to care for treasured possessions, pets, family members and each other.
- Children enter the school at levels of development that are below and often well below those which are typical for their age. About one-third of children arrive in the Reception class having had no pre-school experience but these children adapt quickly to their new surroundings. Well-planned provision and an engaging curriculum ensure that children make good progress during the early years.
- Outcomes for pupils in Year 1 improved significantly in 2016. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the national phonics screening check exceeded the national figure for the first time in some years. In particular, since the school's last inspection, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the standard has risen from well below to well above the national figure.

- In 2016, by the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard for their age, or above, was in line with the national average in reading. In writing and mathematics, the proportion was above the national average. The proportions of disadvantaged pupils achieving the standard were in line with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportions of pupils achieving greater depth in their learning were in line with the national averages in writing and mathematics, but below in reading. No disadvantaged pupils achieved greater depth in reading or writing and the figure for mathematics was well below the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are typically well supported in their learning and care. The additional funds the school receives for these groups of pupils are used effectively. This ensures that the majority make good progress from their starting points over time.
- Teachers are not sharp enough at planning work that meets the different ability needs of pupils. This results in some pupils, particularly the most able disadvantaged, not making as much progress in lessons and over time as they should. On too many occasions, new learning is not embedded sufficiently well and misconceptions continue in pupils' work for too long without being fully addressed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers match work to pupils' abilities more accurately to embed and deepen pupils' learning and ensure that rates of progress and attainment are increased, particularly for the most able disadvantaged pupils.

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

Stephen McMullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you and shared my key lines of enquiry which related to pupils' attendance, boys' outcomes in reading and writing, and the progress and attainment of the most able disadvantaged pupils. I also met with the deputy headteacher, two governors and parents at the start of the school day. I considered the responses of parents from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and a number of staff questionnaires. We visited all classes in the school, spending a short time in each, and looked at a sample of pupils' work together. I viewed a range of documents including an evaluation of the school's performance and plans for further improvement, information on how the pupil premium is spent and a number of policy documents, including those for child protection and special educational needs. I looked at the school's website which complies with Department for Education guidance on what schools should publish.