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Mr S Cotterill
Headteacher
Manor Park School and Nursery
Manor Park North
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Dear Mr Cotterill

Short inspection of Manor Park School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have worked effectively with other leaders to guide your school through a period of great change in terms of leadership and staffing. The support provided to you by the local authority has helped leaders in bringing about school improvement in a range of areas. Your school evaluation and improvement planning is detailed and thorough.

The vast majority of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were supportive of the school. They were happy with the changes that have taken place over the last two years, most notably in terms how the new leadership team is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and their learning.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection also highlighted the positive changes. One pupil, reflecting the views of others, noted: 'As a school, we are always growing. We are adding to things and making our school a better place.'

In the school's previous inspection, the inspectors highlighted areas for improvement. Since your appointment you have worked systematically to deal with these aspects of school improvement. The previous inspectors noted that leaders should develop pupils' speaking and listening skills so that they can explain their learning more fully. This has been addressed well. You ensure that focused support is provided both within school and from external sources so that pupils' language skills are developed. Additionally, pupils are given many opportunities in lessons, assemblies and as part of school and peer councillor roles to develop their speaking

and listening skills. As a result, much progress has been made. The pupils I spoke to during the inspection listened well and spoke in a thoughtful and considered manner.

The inspectors also noted that teachers should check the ongoing progress of pupils in lessons and adapt teaching as necessary. This has been addressed successfully. You have provided training for teachers in this area to ensure that they check learning effectively throughout the day. This was evident during the inspection, where teachers monitored closely the progress of pupils and offered focused guidance and support to move their learning forward.

Finally, inspectors noted that leadership and management should be further improved by developing the role of middle leaders more fully in checking the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility. We agreed to look at this as part of the inspection.

During the inspection, we considered areas where further work is required to support your school's improvement. Although much work has been done to increase pupils' attendance in school, rates of persistent absence still remain high. Additionally, we agreed that pupils' phonic skills require further development to ensure that the proportion of pupils reaching the national threshold in the Year 1 phonics screening check increases. Finally, we discussed the need for subject leaders to further develop their roles. This is to ensure that they have a clear overview of pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have worked hard, with the support of the local authority, to create a culture in school where safety has a high profile. You undertake regular safeguarding audits to ensure that safeguarding measures are of a high standard. Additionally, you provide staff and governors with appropriate training to ensure that they are clear on their responsibilities to keep pupils safe.

The vast majority of pupils spoken to, and those who responded to the online survey before the inspection, noted that the school encourages them to look after their physical and mental health. Pupils are given opportunities to support the safety and well-being of other pupils in roles such as safeguarding councillors. 'Playground Pals' also support pupils in the playground with relationship issues. Such opportunities are greatly valued by the pupils.

Almost all parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey said that their children felt happy and safe in school. One parent, reflecting the views of the majority, noted: 'I have found the staff to be interested in the children's well-being. They are caring and supportive.'

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection I shared with you a number of lines of enquiry. The first considered actions taken by leaders to improve pupils' behaviour and welfare. Pupils' attendance is closely monitored in school. Leaders maintain close contact with parents when their children are absent. Letters are sent home on a regular basis to inform parents of their children's attendance and pupils receive rewards in school for good attendance. As a consequence, the attendance for some groups of pupils is rising and is broadly in line with rates seen nationally. However, this is not currently the case for girls or for pupils who have special educational needs. Additionally, leaders are aware that the level of persistent absence in school remains higher than rates seen nationally.
- Leaders have worked hard to improve pupils' behaviour and reduce the need for exclusions. Staff use the school values to ensure that pupils make the right choices. This was clearly evident during the inspection, where your chosen values shone out. You ensure that pupils requiring support receive the relevant guidance during lessons and within your nurture groups. Leaders have created a nurture room to provide pupils with opportunities to speak with a learning mentor. This empowers pupils to develop the skills to more effectively deal with relationship issues. One pupil, reflecting the views of others, noted, 'If you are down, there are always adults to talk to.' As a result of your clear focus in this area, behaviour has improved considerably. Pupils say that they are proud of their school and all members of staff who responded to the Ofsted survey noted that pupils' behaviour is good in school.
- We also examined ways in which leaders are developing pupils' phonic and reading skills. The majority of children enter early years with communication skills which are below those typical for their age. The leader of early years is highly effective in ensuring that staff undertake appropriate training so that pupils receive quality daily teaching. Regular opportunities are provided for storytelling and for songs and rhymes to be practised. As a result, pupils' awareness of letters and sounds has improved. However, the books that pupils currently take home to practise their phonic skills do not routinely reflect the sounds that they are currently learning in school. Additionally, leaders are aware that the number of pupils reaching the national threshold in the Year 1 phonics screening check, whilst improving, is still below that seen nationally.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils are provided with a broad range of fiction and non-fiction material. This ensures that they read widely and often. Reading weeks and book fairs are used to further engage pupils. Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop their reading skills during lessons. This was evident in the work in pupils' books during the inspection. As a result, your school's current performance information shows that pupils' progress in this area is improving.
- The next line of enquiry considered how effectively additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is being used to support their progress and attainment in school. Leaders create effective action plans to ensure that pupils receive learning which addresses their specific learning needs. As a consequence, your school's most current data shows that disadvantaged pupils are making better

progress. Additionally, your monitoring highlights an increase in self-esteem and confidence for this group of pupils as a result of the support that they have received.

- The final line of enquiry considered the contribution of middle leaders in raising standards across the school. Middle leaders are now responsible for ensuring improvements in their subject areas. You provide them with appropriate training and time out of class to monitor the progress of pupils. This is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. However, leaders agree that further work is required so that middle leaders use assessment information more effectively to plan curriculum provision that meets the needs of all learners.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to reduce rates of persistent absence and improve levels of attendance, most notably for girls and pupils who have special educational needs
- parents are given the support required to become more effective partners in supporting their children's understanding of letters and sounds
- a greater number of pupils achieve the phonics screening check national threshold at the end of Year 1
- the skills of subject leaders are further developed to ensure that they use pupils' performance information effectively to support teachers when planning a curriculum which meets the needs of all 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 Cheshire East. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss issues relating to improving the school. I also met with eight governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with the school's business manager about staff recruitment procedures. I met with subject leaders to discuss pupils' current performance in the school and with your safeguarding team to discuss safeguarding procedures. I also met with the school's improvement partner and had an informal discussion with a representative from the local authority. I had

a formal discussion with a group of pupils about their personal development, behaviour and welfare. We also discussed their learning.

Accompanied by you, I visited all classes in the school. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I scrutinised examples of pupils' work and reviewed documents, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. I also examined the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning and current performance information.

Additionally, I considered 22 responses to Ofsted's staff survey, 28 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, 58 responses to Parent View, including 52 responses to the parent free-text, Ofsted's online parent survey. I also considered information posted on the school's website and written information sent by a parent.