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Miss Amy Stancer
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Stancer

Short inspection of The Lincoln St Giles Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 16 October 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 outstanding in January 2015.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in September 2016, you have upheld the school's high standards. You ensure that staff share your aspirational vision for every child to have good quality learning experiences to accumulate knowledge and achieve their very best. Consequently, staff are determined that all children, including the most vulnerable, are well cared for and get off to the best possible start. Children thrive in stimulating and highly motivating learning environments, both inside and outside.

Leaders have created an exceptionally strong team of staff across the school. You work alongside staff to model strong practice so that the quality of teaching is enhanced. Staff appreciate the attention to their professional training. They know children very well and ensure that every child is seen as unique and special.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive in their praise for the school. They particularly value the warmth and expertise of staff, the frequent communication and the range of rich experiences their children benefit from. One parent, capturing the views held by many, commented, 'The school does an amazing job of teaching, stimulating and truly valuing each child who walks through the gate. I would count the staff as an extension of my son's (and my) support network and I am truly grateful for it.'

There is a continual drive for excellence. Leaders seek out new ways to improve the quality of care and education for children and share the excellent practice in the

school with colleagues from other schools. Leaders have developed clear strategic plans to shape the future of the school and their accurate self-evaluation informs their actions. For example, you recognised that teaching in the Nursery class needed to consistently stretch and challenge children, particularly the most able. Teachers now plan a range of activities to extend children's thinking and enable them to have a deeper understanding in different areas of the curriculum. Information you shared with me showed that children who left the school in July 2018, including the most able, made at least good and sometimes excellent progress.

You and the governors understand the unique context that the school serves. Governors are committed to making sure that the high quality of education in the school continues. They possess a good range of relevant knowledge and skills. They have a good understanding of the information they receive about the performance of the school and ensure that any areas for development improve quickly. Governors are reflective and are determined to improve governance further. They have recently restructured the governing body to better support senior leaders and improve their strategic oversight of the school. However, these changes are in the early stages and their impact is not yet clear.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve their use of assessment information about children. Soon after your appointment you established a new assessment system and ensured that staff were confident in using it to plan for children's next steps. Staff work closely with parents to ensure that they can keep up to date with their children's achievements in school. Parents are able to use the online system to contribute achievements and experiences from home to their children's learning journeys. Parents told me they greatly appreciate this way of seeing what their children have been doing at school.

Leaders are not complacent. They rigorously monitor and evaluate the information gathered about children's achievements across different areas of learning to ensure that children's needs are being met in the best ways possible. Consequently, standards across the school remain high.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are highly vigilant and promptly report any concerns they may have about a child. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and information. Leaders are tenacious in their efforts to ensure that children are safe and well cared for. Leaders work closely with external agencies to support families when necessary.

Children forge trusting relationships with adults and their 'key people'. Key people are proud to call the group of children for whom they have responsibility their 'family'. As part of their role they liaise regularly with parents to ensure that all children's needs are met well, including those children who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

Staff support children in learning how to keep safe and healthy. They are taught about why and how to eat healthy foods and to exercise regularly. For example, adults support children to independently plant, dig up, prepare and cook food. This gives children the opportunity to take controlled risks using garden and kitchen tools.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked closely at the actions leaders are taking to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children. You identify barriers to learning and development for this group of children so that staff can provide timely additional support. You and the staff are determined that disadvantaged children will acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding to match those of other children by the time they leave the school. Disadvantaged children are already developing very positive learning behaviours and understand what is expected of them. They work with increasing concentration and resilience because of exposure to the high-quality provision.
- Teaching in the school is very well planned to meet the needs of all children. Regular meetings of key people, and class teams of staff, mean that planning is continually adjusted to ensure that children's current interests are considered. Good communication with parents enables staff to plan exciting learning experiences for children that inspire them to want to find out more.
- Teachers continually assess the progress children make to make sure that all children achieve as well as they can. They use the information they collect to ensure that there are high-quality experiences which build children's knowledge, and provision that stimulates their curiosities.
- You and the staff set high expectations for children's learning. Teachers plan learning that is based on building children's skills as they grow, develop and progress through the school. Classrooms are carefully designed so that children of all ages are exposed to similar themes and topics to build their knowledge and understanding. For example, children in all classes were observed learning about different aspects of autumn. Children used the garden area to observe birds, identify trees and build nests. Inside, other children prepared ingredients for an autumn vegetable soup. Children playing in a water tray were encouraged by adults to extend their learning about the colours of autumn leaves and independently mixed different coloured inks in the water. They excitedly discussed the effects of mixing one colour with another. Adults used skilful questioning and modelled appropriate language throughout. Consequently, children responded enthusiastically and confidently.
- A large proportion of children typically enter the school with limited knowledge and skills. They often display delays in their communication and language. An increasing number of children speak English as an additional language. Extremely effective, caring relationships enable children to settle into the school quickly. Strong teaching is supported by highly structured routines and clear, well communicated expectations. Children understand the routines exceptionally well and quickly develop confidence. They wait patiently, take turns, share, and help one another to tidy up. Early writing, reading and mathematics skills are taught

very effectively so that by the time they leave the school, children are very well-prepared for the next stage of their education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors use the recent restructuring of the governing body as an opportunity to further develop their understanding of their roles and responsibilities to drive continued school improvement.

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

Stephanie Innes-Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day. You and I visited classrooms together and observed children learning. I looked at a range of evidence of children's achievements and teachers' plans for provision and learning. We discussed the progress of different groups of children and the school's plans for improvement. I considered the responses of 10 parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered the responses of 17 members of staff to Ofsted's online survey for them. There were no responses to the pupil survey. I scrutinised evidence from a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance, procedures and records for safeguarding, minutes from meetings of the governing body and information on how additional funding is spent.