

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



5 March 2018

Gary Nichol  
Headteacher  
Lark Hall Primary School (Including Lark Hall Centre for Pupils with Autism)  
Smedley Street  
Clapham  
London  
SW4 6PH

Dear Mr Nichol

### **Short inspection of Lark Hall Primary School (Including Lark Hall Centre for Pupils with Autism)**

Following my visit to the school on 20 February 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 November 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, your senior leaders and the governing body have high ambitions for the school and its pupils. You are clear about your achievements to date and the areas that require further development, and you have a clear plan to achieve this. You and your staff are proud of the inclusive nature of the school and the creative and nurturing learning community you have developed. You have utilised every area of the school, providing a rich and interesting environment, where pupils can explore and learn together. Differences are celebrated and pupils are encouraged to share their breadth of cultural and social experiences. You and your staff are highly committed to developing pupils' personal, social and character traits, so that they are fully prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils are taught to reflect on their emotional well-being and how their actions might have an impact on others. As a result, pupils learn and play together, showing respect and tolerance towards each other, staff and visitors to the school.

You have created a thematic curriculum that encompasses both academic and extra-curricular opportunities. Staff work collaboratively together to plan interesting and engaging activities. External providers bring a wealth of expertise. For instance, during the inspection, key stage 1 pupils experienced the delight of playing in a 'junk orchestra' and children in the autism centre were having their weekly cycling lesson. Trips, visits and attendance at events is encouraged and you proactively

exploit the cultural opportunities provided by the capital city. As one parent said: 'My son is very happy at this school as he receives all the support that he needs.'

You have addressed the areas identified at the previous inspection. In particular, you have strengthened the early years provision by developing a large and creative early years environment, where children are actively encouraged to explore, imagine, play and learn. Staff work seamlessly together to ensure that children's individual needs are met and that their progress is systematically checked and recorded. For instance, one child proudly took me through their 'celebration book', which showed the breadth of activities they had undertaken and captured the good progress they have made since starting at the school.

Governors are knowledgeable and committed. While they are highly supportive of the work you and your team have done to improve the school still further, they are clear about their responsibilities to ensure that the actions you take have appropriate impact on pupils' progress. Governors are very proud of the school and their engagement with parents and carers. They are therefore keen to publicise its merits more widely within the community.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Your designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL ensure that safeguarding is given the highest priority. Systems for referrals and record-keeping are of a high calibre. As a result, work with external agencies ensures that pupils, and where appropriate their families, get timely and effective support and guidance. Delegated actions are checked systematically to ensure that no pupil's needs go unnoticed. Your staff and governors are well trained and understand the prevalent risks in the local community. These include neglect, domestic violence, female genital mutilation and gang affiliation. All staff have read the latest safeguarding documentation and many have undertaken 'Prevent' duty training so that they can be vigilant around the potential for pupils to be radicalised. Checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are in line with the statutory guidance and your DSL and the safeguarding governor check records regularly.

Pupils receive regular information on how to keep safe, both in school and in the wider community. They explore issues to do with bullying, learn how to stay safe online and know who to turn to should they be concerned by anything. You ensure that pupils can raise any emerging issues through pupil questionnaires and the school council.

The school site is secure, well maintained and conducive to pupils' learning. Staff in the centre for autism are highly trained and skilled in managing pupils' potentially challenging behaviour. They keep detailed logs of any incidents and put plans in place to address each pupil's needs.

Pupils' attendance is improving. You are working closely with those families of pupils who do not attend school as regularly as they should or believe it is acceptable to take time off during term time. However, you acknowledge that this work is ongoing

and needs to be maintained if your attendance target is to be reached this year.

## **Inspection findings**

- You and your staff are committed to ensuring that all pupils make at least good progress irrespective of their starting points. You have accurately identified that some groups of pupils do not make the same good progress as their peers and more pupils need to exceed the expected progress. This was an area identified at the previous inspection. You were disappointed by the 2016 outcomes and took rapid action to analyse the reasons and understand the issues.
- You have instigated a number of initiatives to tackle this. Last year, you and your team introduced a new programme across the school that supports pupils to gain resilience, welcome challenge and enjoy working independently. You have a 'three teacher model' in each year group, to ensure that staff can plan creative teaching approaches together and that each pupil's needs are met. Your online assessment system is accessible to staff and pupils, informs teachers' planning and carefully tracks pupils' progress. Your senior leaders monitor closely the quality of teaching and learning through their 'deep dives' and support middle leaders to check on provision in their areas. Staff are reflective practitioners and regularly team-teach or film themselves teaching, so that they can share best practice. As a result, the progress pupils made by the time they left Year 6 in 2017, and the proportion who achieved the expected standard, was above the national average.
- You and your team's priority now is to ensure that more of the current pupils in key stage 2 exceed the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Year 6 pupils' work seen during the inspection indicates a range of challenging and appropriate activities that would support pupils to achieve these higher standards.
- The centre for pupils with autism provides a safe learning environment where pupils with a variety of needs can make good progress from their starting points. Staff are highly trained, committed and know each pupil's needs in detail. They use visual aids and signing to support pupils' communication skills. Staff design activities to engage and motivate pupils to work collaboratively and to learn new skills. For instance, learning to cook together is a particular favourite. Pupils have weekly swimming and cycling lessons and excel in art. While they are taught for the majority of the time in the centre, staff look for appropriate times when they can be included in the mainstream provision. Friday club, lunch and after-school activities, music and sport sessions all provide ample opportunities. The centre leader keeps comprehensive records and evidence of the progress each pupil makes. These clearly indicate that pupils make good academic, social and emotional progress from their starting points.
- Improving literacy is given high priority across the school. There is a systematic phonics programme taught well in the early years and complemented by one-to-one and guided reading sessions. Your literacy leads ensure that staff across the school are well trained and that high expectations about the quality of the teaching of literacy are shared. Classrooms have a range of interesting books and during the inspection, a book fair created much excitement helped by the arrival

of a life-sized 'Gruffalo'. Staff intertwine stories, rhymes and songs into activities throughout the day. Each week there is a class book linked to the current topic and reading texts chosen by the class teachers are suitably challenging. Reading volunteers support those pupils identified as needing more time to enjoy the pleasure of reading. Challenges such as spelling bees, reading and writing competitions help to enthuse and motivate pupils. Consequently, those achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2017 was in line with the national average. By the end of key stage 2, pupils made above average progress in reading.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- current actions to improve pupils' attendance are maintained and extended
- they regularly evaluate the impact of new initiatives, to make sure that more pupils exceed the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and your senior leaders to discuss your self-evaluation and improvement plans. I met with representatives from the governing body and spoke to the local authority school improvement adviser on the telephone. I met with middle leaders. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including curriculum information, referrals to external agencies, attendance data and the record of safeguarding checks made on staff. I visited lessons with two of your senior leaders to gather evidence on particular strands of teaching, learning and assessment. With your leaders, I looked at pupils' progress in Year 6 writing books and mathematics work. I spoke to staff and pupils during informal times and in lessons. I listened informally to pupils reading. I took account of the nine written responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I visited the early years area and the centre for pupils with autism. No pupils responded to Ofsted's online pupil survey. The staff survey was not shared with staff.