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5 April 2019

Mrs Helen Currie  
Headteacher  
Low Hall Nursery School  
Low Hall Lane  
Walthamstow  
London  
E17 8BE

Dear Mrs Currie

### **Short inspection of Low Hall Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 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 January 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You are committed to all children achieving their best and are rightly proud of your highly inclusive ethos. Your collegiate approach has developed all practitioners' knowledge and understanding of what constitutes strong early years practice. You and your leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and any areas identified as needing further improvement are addressed quickly. You make effective use of external partnerships to develop staff but the sharing of the school's strong practice with other schools is relatively new and undeveloped.

Governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are highly knowledgeable about the school. They have a structured approach to visiting the school which enables them to check improvements first hand. Committee meetings are used well to explore the work of the school and ensure that leaders are striving for high standards. Staff that completed Ofsted's online questionnaire were positive about every aspect of the school. They feel well supported by you, appreciate the improvements that have been made and feel that the school is well led and managed.

You and your staff team have built strong professional relationships with families, which they appreciate. One parent told me that they would rate the school as '10 out of 10'. The vast majority of parents and carers who sent texts via Ofsted's free-text service were also appreciative of your work. Two parents described the nursery as 'amazing' and another stated that they have the 'utmost faith and trust' in the staff.

You have focused on successfully addressing the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. We evaluated your work on two of these areas as part of this inspection. You are now making effective use of peer coaching to develop the practice of others. I observed that practitioners are now precisely identifying children's next steps in their learning journeys, which are followed up to ensure that all children are sufficiently challenged. You have a range of strategies in place to promote and tackle poorer attendance. The school's work with the parents of those pupils who do not attend regularly is not as effective as it could be.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have established a strong culture of safeguarding and child safety is a clear priority. All staff understand the school's procedures and know who to report initial concerns to. One member of staff told me that she knows 'not to wait' if she has a concern.

Staff appreciate the regular training that they receive and understand how to relate what they have learnt to their context. Staff know families well and are also aware of the potential risks within the community. Regular 'child awareness' meetings ensure that children with additional needs are well supported.

The school environment is safe because it is checked regularly for potential hazards. Procedures for dealing with accidents are robust as are protocols for administering medication. Staff and the parents that I spoke to, or who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, believe the school to be a safe environment. During my visit I observed happy, confident, independent children.

### **Inspection findings**

- For the first line of enquiry, I evaluated to what extent you maximise opportunities for children to develop spoken language across a wider range of activities. I chose this line of enquiry because it was identified as an area for improvement in the previous inspection and a priority in your own school improvement plan.
- All practitioners promote high-quality speech throughout the nursery and you and your team take every opportunity to engage children in productive talk. Children of different ages mix well throughout the provision and practitioners are skilled in providing appropriate learning activities for children according to their starting points. For example, I observed one practitioner using simple language with one child and then developing sentence structure with another.
- The development of vocabulary is a clear focus. I observed practitioners skilfully

model and extend language, introducing new vocabulary through their conversations. I observed open ended questioning being used well to develop learning and understanding.

- The recent implementation of an approach to structuring storytelling is also supporting the development of spoken language. The children respond well to the four bags labelled 'character', 'setting', 'problem' and 'resolution'. Children know the routine and showed genuine excitement to learn what the new 'problem' might be today. They were also creative in their ideas for resolving it. This storytelling approach is then used well to promote and lead children into early story writing. As a result, children are developing a wide range of vocabulary, as well as the ability to tell stories and use story language. Children with low starting points are making strong progress and are therefore increasingly well prepared for transition to Reception class.
- For the second line of enquiry I evaluated how well leaders develop children's mathematical skills. I chose this line of enquiry because it was also identified as an area for improvement in the previous inspection.
- Practitioners provide carefully selected, high-quality resources to engage children in mathematical activities. Your 'numbers in everything' approach ensures that practitioners utilise every opportunity to practise using numbers. Practitioners consolidate younger children's ability to count to 10 but the most able children are encouraged to extend their understanding. For example, I observed a game of hide and seek in which children were encouraged to choose a larger number to count to and rose to the challenge, counting confidently up to 20 with support.
- Practitioners model activities to develop understanding and promote mathematical vocabulary. I observed a child trying to build a tower like the adult, stating, 'Look, my tower is even taller.' Practitioners also consolidate the link between the abstract and concrete. For example, a child was encouraged to show the correct number of fingers when saying the number. This was then mirrored and praised by the practitioner. As a result, children are making strong and sustained progress in mathematics, including those with low starting points on entry.
- For the final line of enquiry, I evaluated how effectively you and your leaders meet the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). I chose this because you identified this area as a particular strength.
- You and your leaders provide a highly inclusive environment in which you welcome children regardless of their individual needs. You have developed a reputation for strong practice and parents subsequently choose the nursery because it is recommended to them by local health professionals. You make effective use of expertise within the school, as well as external agencies, for training and ensure that any recommendations are implemented by staff.
- Children with SEND that I observed were comfortable in exploring their environment and engaged in chosen activities for sustained periods. Learning journeys are detailed and staff identify helpful next steps and follow these up to ensure that they are met. For example, a practitioner had identified that a child was scared to touch playdough. Through planned activities, such as introducing different textures to touch, I observed this fear being resolved over a short

period of time. Individual plans to support children with SEND are detailed because you know the children extremely well. Targets are well matched to children's needs and reviewed regularly. The evidence from these plans has resulted in successful applications for education, health and care plans, when required.

- You and your leaders provide very strong support to parents at the identification stage of SEND, throughout their time in the nursery and when choosing a primary school place. Parents are very well informed of their child's progress but they are not as yet equal partners in the production of support plans. As a result of your work, children with SEND are very well supported and the vast majority make strong progress from their different starting points.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strong practice is disseminated beyond the school
- parents of children with SEND are equal partners in the development of support plans
- they continue to improve the attendance of children who do not attend regularly.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Morrison  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, other school leaders and office staff. I met with the chair of governors and spoke on the telephone to the local authority school improvement advisor linked to the school. I talked to parents as they dropped off their children, considered the views of 39 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's parent questionnaire and read 24 comments provided via Ofsted's free-text service. I considered seven responses to the staff questionnaire. I visited all learning spaces with senior leaders, spoke to children and observed activities across the provision. I scrutinised a range of documents provided by the school, children's learning journeys and school policies and procedures and checked the school's single central record.