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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Sandra Campbell
Executive Headteacher
Church Hill Nursery School and Children's Centre
46 Woodbury Road
Walthamstow
E17 9SB

Dear Mrs Campbell

Short inspection of Church Hill Nursery School and Children's Centre

Following my visit to the school on 13 September 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 outstanding in July 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your outstanding leadership, the school continues to flourish and grow. In February 2015, the school federated with another local nursery school. You are now the executive headteacher of the two schools with one over-arching governing body. One aspect of my line of enquiry for this inspection was to examine the impact of the federation on the outstanding judgements made at the time of the last inspection. This inspection established that the restructuring and broadening of leadership roles, including those of the governing body, has added to the existing strong capacity of leaders to sustain excellence and secure further improvements across both schools.

Governors, and particularly the chair of the governing body, have considerable experience and expertise in the field of early years. This has proved to be a major factor in securing continuous improvement. For example, governors have steered the school through many recent initiatives, not least the recent federation, as well as the local authority's reorganisation of services and the decommissioning of the children's centres in both nursery schools.

The previous inspection identified that adults did not always make the most of opportunities for children to solve problems. First-hand observations confirm that children are now adept at problem-solving because adults carefully plan activities which promote their thinking. However, never complacent, you intend to engage in a project specifically designed to develop children's thinking skills still further.

Parents are delighted about the education and care their children receive. A number of responses from parents told me that they were keen to send their children to the school

because it has such an excellent reputation in the neighbourhood. Many commented on the highly inclusive ethos of the school. Parents feel listened to, that their views are valued and that they are full partners in their child's education. Cultural diversity is celebrated as children from a wide variety of different ethnic backgrounds, who speak many different languages at home, all get on very well together. They are complimentary about the highly creative and imaginative indoor and outdoor classrooms. The learning environment for the three- to five-year-old children is exemplary. Activities, displays and use of apparatus stimulate, develop and deepen children's thinking, language and learning. Children are confident to explore on their own and collaboratively with their friends. Nevertheless, the learning environment for the two-year-old provision on a separate site is not as stimulating as the main nursery.

Indeed, your commitment to equality of opportunity means that all children achieve exceptionally well. This includes those children who are eligible for additional government pupil premium funding, children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the most able children. The progress made by different groups was a second line of enquiry in this inspection. Inspection evidence confirms that both you and the senior leader track children's attainment and progress meticulously, so that you can implement additional interventions and support to speed up children's progress. The senior leader is scrupulous in her analysis of the impact of intervention strategies to boost the progress of those children with learning difficulties. The most able children have additional challenges to make them think hard in developing key literacy, mathematical and scientific skills. Nonetheless, the impact of these activities is not evaluated as effectively as those for children who find learning difficult. Furthermore, the analysis of achievement information is not sufficiently focused on the progress that the most able disadvantaged children make. This makes it more difficult for you and other leaders, including governors, to assess whether activities are having maximum impact.

Safeguarding is effective.

Arrangements for safeguarding are thorough and are kept under constant review. Safeguarding children is given the highest priority. In discussions with staff it is clear that everyone understands that safeguarding is their collective responsibility. You are well supported in your role as designated safeguarding lead by three deputy safeguarding leaders. As a result, there is a clear and coordinated approach to securing early help and engagement with parents and professionals as soon as problems arise or are identified. You and the deputies work closely with external agencies to provide strong support for families and parents going through difficult times. The lead practitioner for children looked after is an outstanding advocate for vulnerable children. She pursues every single avenue tenaciously to make sure that these children have the additional support they need irrespective of the placing local authority they are from. Parents are highly appreciative of the support and help they receive from staff.

Governors ensure that everyone has up-to-date safeguarding training. They regularly review procedures, including all the required recruitment checks. Staff are well supported and suitably trained on a regular basis, so that they are constantly alert to any potential dangers. Everyone is fully up to date with all the changes in the statutory guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' September 2016. The staff handbook reflects the highest expectations and responsibilities for safeguarding children. It also includes a code of conduct which is

non-negotiable for when they interact with children, parents and the public. This document also spells out clearly the use of personal mobile phones, laptops and tablets.

Staff encourage children to become confident and respectful individuals. Within safe routines, children are encouraged to develop the ability to evaluate risks such as climbing trees and taking turns, which contributes to their own and others' safety. Attendance is carefully tracked and any concerns rapidly followed up. As a result, attendance is good and improving.

Inspection findings

- Your focus never waivers from making sure that children have an outstanding education. As a consequence, children are exceptionally well prepared for their next stage of education and beyond. Staff and governors share your high aspirations. Senior teachers and practitioners have clear roles and responsibilities. By extending the senior leadership team, there is an even greater drive and ability to secure improvements. For example, the senior teacher has responsibility for the two-year-old provision. She has recently ensured that staff have received training and support so that they are effective in meeting the needs of those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- You welcome new initiatives and projects with other early years providers. For example, you have established provision for the most disadvantaged two-year-old children with support from the local authority. Both you and governors have made sure that only staff with the right qualifications and experience were recruited for this age group. You have forged wide and successful partnerships with a variety of different provisions. As well as the seamless work with the other nursery school in the federation, you have created close links with a local primary school. You have also set up an early learning and childcare hub to complement the early years local authority network. This means that you are well placed to share expertise and to support the state, private, voluntary and independent early years settings.
- Governors have an excellent understanding of early years education and use this to provide the right balance of support and challenge for leaders. They make regular and focused visits based on key priorities to check on the effectiveness of the school.
- Regular monitoring of the school's work by leaders makes sure that every child achieves their full potential, this includes in early reading skills and phonics. Tracking of progress and attainment enables leaders to identify any gaps in learning in order to adjust planning. It enables them to identify any child at risk of underachieving and to provide tailored support for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This information is also used to deepen the learning of the most able children.
- Nonetheless, the impact of such provision for the most able children and the tracking of their achievement, including that of the most able disadvantaged children, is not as well developed as it is for other key groups.
- Interventions and support are regular and tailored to the individual needs and abilities of the children. The early years pupil premium funding is used effectively. This includes access to extended day-care provision and one-to-one support if required. Your own achievement information confirms that from low starting points, children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those children who are eligible for the pupil premium make rapid progress.

- Many of these children develop skills that are typical for their age by the end of the year. A variety of projects are used to speed up the learning of those children who have speech and language difficulties. These involve the speech therapist who also trains staff to implement focused language sessions. In 2016, almost all children achieved levels typical for their age, with a minimum of one out of two children exceeding them.
- The learning environment both indoors and outdoors in the nursery is broad, vibrant and exciting. Every opportunity is taken to encourage children to make marks, to read captions and labels, as well as to understand the functions of print. There are numerous places and equipment for children to investigate and play with. Children's independent skills are encouraged continuously, throughout their play and work. The quality of learning experiences is evident, as children persevere for sustained lengths of time in their work, rarely becoming distracted.
- The two-year-old provision is benefiting the most disadvantaged children. In small groups, adults provide a very nurturing and secure place for children to develop, learn and thrive. Activities are planned carefully to make sure that learning builds on what children know and can do. However, because the setting shares the premises with the local cricket club, staff have to pack away all the equipment each day. The learning environment has very few displays to capture children's imagination. There are very few captions and written prompts to promote children's learning in key areas, including their early communication, literacy and numeracy skills.
- You lead by example and as a result staff are confident to try out new ideas and to reflect on their work. Regular staff meetings enable staff to discuss what went well and what they would do differently. This professional discussion extends across the federation where expertise is shared to enhance existing outstanding practice still further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the impact of activities to boost the progress of the most able children, including those who are disadvantaged, is evaluated more precisely
- the two-year-old provision is as stimulating and exciting as that in the nursery.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Waltham Forest. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the two senior leaders from both schools and two members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I held a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority. We visited all of the teaching groups during the morning to observe the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including the two-year-old provision on a separate site. I took account of the 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View and the school's own recent parent survey. I spoke to a number of parents throughout the inspection. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about teaching, children's achievement, staff training records, safeguarding checks, policies, and procedures. I also looked at, and discussed with you, your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the current improvement plans.