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Mrs L Pritchard
Headteacher
Whitefriars Primary School
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Dear Mrs Pritchard

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: early learning

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and children, during my visit on 18 November 2010 to evaluate the provision and outcomes for children in communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with you and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader; scrutiny of relevant documentation, including assessments of children's learning; and observation of sessions in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The effectiveness of meeting the children's communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional learning and development needs is outstanding.

Achievement

- Children begin their time in the Nursery displaying skills and aptitudes that are well below expectations for their age. Children's attainment has improved significantly since 2009. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, they are broadly in line with national figures and in some areas above.
- Children settle quickly and enjoy very good relationships with adults. They make good and often outstanding progress, particularly in personal, social and emotional development. This is because staff lose no time in getting

to know children and their families well and are skilled in observing children as they learn, which informs future planning and provision.

- Children have very good opportunities to become active and independent learners. They show enjoyment, curiosity and sustained concentration in learning activities. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and sometimes outstanding. For example, they are considerate to one another and are able to take turns when sharing a magnetic board with a partner to build simple three-letter words.

Quality of provision

- The school has worked closely with the local authority to improve provision, with a particular focus on English as an additional language. The school has continued to forge strong links with the children's centre which shares the same campus as the school. A programme of observations and opportunities to work alongside staff from the children's centre has been introduced. As a result, transition for those children from the Children's Centre is seamless.
- The learning environment both indoors and outdoors is of the highest quality. It is a secure environment in which children can learn safely. Children are able to move freely between both the indoor and outdoor learning areas. They are surrounded with stimulating learning opportunities to develop and extend their language development. Children make very good use of mark-making and writing opportunities outdoors, as well as indoors.
- All adults know what the purpose of the learning activities are so that they can help children to make the most of the resources and activities provided. All activities are designed to promote children's independence and learning through carefully guided questioning. Well-positioned visual aid cards help children and guide adults to the learning to be gained from each carefully planned activity.
- Parents are seen as partners in learning. They are offered regular training so that they can also provide useful observations from activities that children do outside of school.
- The programme to teach children their letters and sounds (phonics) has been very well introduced within the setting. Adults are skilled and confident at teaching language development and, as a result, enable children to progress at a much faster pace.
- All adults who work within the school model positive behaviour towards one another and the children. Learning activities support the development of children's independence. Through discussions, role-play activities and games children are encouraged to develop their abilities to work cooperatively. The school's commitment to inclusion means that it provides lots of opportunities for children to play and learn about each other's different religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds. Support for children with English as an additional language is very good.
- Teachers draw on their considerable subject knowledge and use new technologies expertly and to good effect to provide children with

stimulating and enjoyable learning experiences. For example, the expert use of interactive whiteboards enhances teaching and engages pupils in learning letters.

Leadership and management

- Leaders and managers are very secure and confident about the quality and accuracy of the school's self-evaluation, especially in regard to children's progress. Leaders establish effective and trusting communication with parents as soon as possible after their children have started in the Nursery or school. They know exactly where each child is in their learning and development because of the thorough and embedded assessment and tracking processes now firmly in place.
- Senior leaders carry out regular informal and formal classroom observations to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Outcomes are used effectively to inform the performance management process, which in turn is linked closely with the assessment of pupils' progress every half-term.
- The school works closely with a wide range of other agencies, such as speech and language specialists to ensure that children with additional needs are provided with every opportunity to overcome barriers, learn and make progress.
- Staff are provided with an extensive training programme to update their skills and knowledge. Their development needs are identified clearly, provided for and monitored through the school's performance management systems. The school is regarded as a valuable community resource within the borough.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that more children are supported to make outstanding progress in their learning and achieve in line with national expectations by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop the Early Years Foundation Stage in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector