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Mrs V Cameron
Headteacher
The Park Lane (Foundation) Primary School
Park Lane
Whittlesey
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Dear Mrs Cameron,

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 23 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, the Early Years SENCO 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 good.

Achievement

- Children are working above the expected level for their age in their personal and social development. From an early age, they show care and consideration for others. They make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage in developing their self-confidence and show positive attitudes when participating in the wide range of activities on offer indoors and outdoors. Children in the Nursery make excellent progress in developing their levels of self-care and independence. Well organised

routines at snack time in the Nursery ensure that they help themselves to healthy drinks and food and dress confidently for outdoors.

- Good relationships with adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage help children to make good progress in developing their social skills. Children are motivated and interested in a broad range of activities. They act sensibly around the classrooms and outdoor areas and help out thoughtfully by clearing away and tidying up. As they choose other children to eat a healthy snack with, they are encouraged to form good friendships and play and learn harmoniously. A high proportion of children entered Reception in 2009 with low levels of emotional skills. They received appropriate support and the majority made good progress in their emotional development by the time they joined Year 1.
- Children are working at the expected level for their age and above in the majority of areas of communication, language and literacy. Children make good progress in developing their writing skills; from an early age they are able to form letters and write their own names. The school's previous Reception cohort contained a high proportion of boys with special educational needs and with low standards of language skills and reading development. All children made a least satisfactory progress in these areas with the majority making good progress from their starting points. Children make less progress in developing their language for communication than in other areas of communication, language and literacy.

Quality of provision

- An interesting and welcoming environment encourages children's excellent levels of independence. They show a good understanding of others because from an early age they are given experiences of a range of cultures and faiths and they are able to recognise similarities and variations with the wider community. Outdoor areas are well resourced with excellent facilities outside the Nursery so that children enjoy the opportunities to play and develop. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to promote children's thinking and discussions, especially during outdoor activities.
- Activities are planned well so that they are closely matched to individual children's needs and are based on a thorough range of formal and informal assessments. Parents are provided with detailed information about their children's progress and the next steps in their learning. Children are given clear targets on how to improve in their daily literacy and numeracy activities and these are clearly displayed and shared with children.
- Support staff are deployed well to support children's welfare and learning and they help to engage children in a wide range of activities. They form good relationships with children and encourage their independence well.

Staff occasionally miss opportunities to encourage children to blend and segment sounds and develop their early reading and writing.

Leadership and management

- Leaders and managers have a good understanding and knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They provide strong leadership and a clear vision of improvement based on accurate analysis. They have introduced more thorough data and tracking of children's progress against age-related expectations. This provides leaders and managers with an accurate picture of the strengths and areas for development and allows them to closely monitor progress across the Early Years. Plans to share information electronically about children's progress with parents and carers and allow them to support their children's learning are well advanced. Partnerships with parents and carers are strong. Adults, with children in the Nursery, regularly contribute observations of their child's learning to an 'achievement tree', although this process is not fully embedded in the Reception classes.
- Procedures to observe and assess children's progress are thorough and draw on a good range of formal and informal assessments. Children are assessed in a wide range of areas as they enter the Early Years and these provide an accurate picture of children's starting points. This information is used well to identify any lapses or delays in children's learning and development and involve other professionals. Good partnerships with a range of agencies help the school to provide good support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that provision outdoors includes greater opportunities for children to develop their language for communication and thinking
- ensuring that all staff consistently expect children to apply their blending and segmenting skills in their early reading and writing
- encouraging greater engagement by parents and carers by increasing their contributions of observations and assessments of children's achievements.

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 inspections. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield
Her Majesty's Inspector