

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



11 March 2016

Miss C Inman
Headteacher
New Mills Nursery School
Sett Close
New Mills
High Peak
SK22 4AQ

Dear Miss Inman

Short inspection of New Mills Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 25 February 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 good in December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your ambition and commitment ensure that the culture of the school remains a highly inclusive one, where everyone matters, and where staff frequently go above and beyond their formal responsibilities. You are relentless in your efforts to provide the best for the children and families at New Mills Nursery School and are not afraid to challenge anyone who does not support the school's journey of improvement.

The governing body shares your vision for improvement and demonstrates the capacity and skills needed to support the school successfully through the challenges of the current process of staffing restructure. The Chair of the Governing Body is exceptionally skilled and is clear and determined about what the school needs to do next. However, you both acknowledge that the school's written plans for improvement need to be sharper to ensure that the necessary time and resources are in place to bring about the changes required.

You have worked hard to maintain the school's strengths, which were identified at the last inspection, while also tackling the areas of weaker practice. Your passion for the children to experience a rich early years curriculum, and to develop a love of the outdoors and natural world, is equalled by your resolve for them to acquire the essential early skills in literacy and mathematics. In 2015, the proportion of children

exceeding the expected levels for their age group in reading and writing was significantly higher than for the previous year.

You have established effective systems for monitoring the work of teachers in the school and this has paid dividends. It is clear that they share your commitment and passion for the school and have the highest expectations of themselves and of the children. All teachers use their deep knowledge of how children learn to plan a wide range of exciting and challenging play experiences. As a result, outcomes for children across the school are continuing to rise. Teachers ensure that structured, small-group sessions promote children's confidence and skill in communication, literacy and numeracy. However, you quite rightly recognise that there is still too much inconsistency in the quality of the support and interaction given by a small minority of teaching assistants. As a result, there are occasions when children's interest in learning is lost.

You successfully monitor the progress and attainment of individual children but there is more to be done to ensure that leaders have a clear view of the rates of progress of different groups of children during their time in the nursery.

Since the last inspection, you have formed a close collaboration with all of the primary schools in the locality and this is contributing to the improved teaching, learning and assessment across the nursery.

Safeguarding is effective.

You are fearless in your resolve to put children's well-being above all else. You achieve an impressive balance of ensuring that all children are safe and exceptionally well cared for at the nursery, while also helping them to be confident and resilient young learners who are not afraid to take risks and to keep trying when they experience difficulty. The planning of challenging activities in the outdoor environment supports this exceptionally well.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and all staff are very clear about their individual responsibilities. There is a culture in the school where all children and families are valued, respected and listened to.

All necessary checks and records are completed and you work with professionals from other agencies very effectively to ensure that important information is shared quickly and accurately. The governor who has responsibility for safeguarding has a wealth of professional skill and experience in this area, and makes an invaluable contribution to this aspect of the school's work.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors monitor the work of the school effectively and have an accurate view of the areas which need more development. The governing body is enhanced greatly by the energy and high expectations of the Chair of the Governing Body. You work in close partnership together and this is beginning to quicken the pace of improvement.
- Leaders with responsibility for specific areas of learning fulfil their roles to the highest standard. The teacher with responsibility for literacy has been particularly successful in training other staff to deliver the new approach to teaching phonics. Consequently, children thoroughly enjoy this area of learning and are making good progress. They cannot wait to join in the group sessions with 'Flip the frog' and clearly delight in this part of the nursery day. The most able are beginning to blend sounds together and the majority of other children are developing a strong knowledge of the sounds which individual letters make.
- You lead the school expertly in the inclusion of children with a range of complex needs and disabilities. You refuse to accept any barriers to children's participation in the full range of adult-led and independent play activities, including Forest School activities which take place off site. You have recently adapted parts of the garden and main classroom areas to enable all children to access all activities more easily.
- The school's plans for improvement identify an ambitious range of actions to secure further developments at the school. There is a clear rationale for each of these targets, which focus on areas where children's learning outcomes are weaker than others. However, it is not always clear how and when individual actions will be carried out. Consequently, governors do not always ensure that senior leaders have the time and resources required to lead the school forward in the work which has been agreed.
- You secure the trust and respect of children, parents and staff in your own school as well as that of other headteachers and local authority colleagues. Your skill and vast experience, supporting children's development through a high-quality early years curriculum, are valued greatly by all who know the school.
- Parents are anxious to praise all aspects of the school's work but are especially keen to talk about the excellent progress which their children make during their time with you. Parents also told me how much the children enjoy bringing the school's Paddington Bear rucksack home with them and how this enables them to support their children in developing early reading and writing skills.

- A key focus of your work since the last inspection has been to establish closer working relationships with neighbouring schools. This is proving to be of enormous value. You deliver training to other schools, and this is supporting children's transition to their next stage of education, as well as helping to secure the school's financial sustainability in the future. It has also enabled your teachers to become more confident and skilled in assessing children's learning more accurately and to ensure that your approaches to the teaching of phonics and mathematics are consistent with those followed in the local primary schools.
- The majority of children attend the nursery for one year and start with skills broadly in line with those expected for their age. Records show that they make good progress in all areas of learning during their time at New Mills, but particularly so in the areas of personal and social and emotional development and physical development.
- You track individual children's progress and outcomes effectively and this enables you to identify next steps for their learning. You also analyse children's outcomes carefully when they leave the nursery and this helps you to identify priorities for the coming year's plans for improvement. However, there is more to be done to analyse the ongoing progress of different groups of children to ensure that leaders are able to hold all staff to account for the progress of all children and to identify areas of their practice that need further improvement.
- Children enjoy their learning and are eager to talk about their nursery. The quality and range of activities provided in the outdoor area are exceptionally high and continuing strengths of the school. Wellington boots and waterproof clothing are provided for all children, and adults model a strong sense of interest and care for the natural world. Consequently, children love this area of their learning and are able to talk knowledgeably about the plants and features of their nursery garden and small woodland area.
- Your documentation shows that girls are becoming more confident in using a range of technology. They use equipment such as headphones and microphones to access stories and music as well as using electronic tablets to access their favourite recipes and to access information about topics which interest them. As a result, the majority of girls now demonstrate age-appropriate skills in this area of learning from low starting points last term.
- Children excel in their self-confidence and have positive attitudes to learning. They behave well because they feel valued and know what is expected of them. Daily routines are used effectively to remind children how to listen and to encourage them to think carefully. Simple songs are sung each day to promote children's understanding of the days of the week and the weather.
- There are occasions where some support staff do not reflect on the effectiveness of their practice enough. As a result, they ask too many closed questions, and do not challenge children's thinking.

- Where teaching is strongest, children of all abilities are challenged to make their own decisions about what needs to be done next, to keep trying and to think about what they can do better next time. This is particularly evident in learning activities which take place in the outdoor area and during the school's weekly visits to the local forest.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- plans for improving the school identify when and how actions will be carried out
- systems for improving the work of teaching assistants are embedded quickly, so that all staff are able to extend and challenge children's language and thinking effectively
- leaders have a clear view of the ongoing progress of different groups of children during their time at the nursery.

Yours sincerely

Clare Cossor

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the other senior leader, two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I met with a number of parents informally at the start of the day and took account of the 17 responses from Parent View. I spoke to children and staff and observed teaching and learning during the main part of the nursery day, as well as two small group sessions. I considered a range of documentation, including records of children's progress, and safeguarding policies and records.