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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Carly Orbell
Acting headteacher
Hillview Nursery School
Grange Road
Harrow
HA2 0LW

Dear Mrs Orbell

Short inspection of Hillview Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have made sure that the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection have been resolved. You have secured further improvements. I was instantly impressed by the inviting welcome extended by everyone when I visited the school. This is because you have great pride in the work of the school, where staff morale is high. Your inclusive ethos promotes a harmonious and calm environment. You have made sure that the school continues to grow and develop. You are determined to secure further improvements, because there is a clear focus on developing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The robust tracking system you have introduced confirms progress is good for all key groups of children and that some make rapid progress. This is particularly so in children's communication and language skills. Children with special educational needs or disability also make good progress in their language and personal development. The classroom and outdoor areas promote all seven areas of learning well. Nonetheless, although achievement in mathematics is good, too few children make rapid progress because there are not enough opportunities for children to investigate mathematical concepts for themselves. Furthermore, the children's long-term targets are not reviewed regularly enough to make sure that those children who achieve their targets before the end of the year are set additional targets to make sure that they achieve what they are capable of, particularly the most able.

The school has gone through enormous change since the previous inspection. You clarified that since your appointment as acting headteacher in September 2014 the school has become a stand-alone maintained Nursery school and is no longer part of a children's centre. Although both settings continue to share the same premises, each has a separate governing body. All staff have revised terms of employment as most are now employed directly by the school. Nursery-aged children who are registered at the partner primary school, Roxeth, continue to be educated at this school and all children are taught by a nursery teacher who is directly employed by the primary school.

The relatively newly constituted governing body is highly effective, which is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The chair of the governing body is also a governor at the primary school. Likewise, the headteacher of the partner primary school is also a governor at this school. The vice-chair is the hub manager for all of the borough's children's centres, as well as a governor for the children's centre adjacent to this school. This results in significant collaborative working between all three settings, not least in the sharing of expertise in leadership, including governance. There is now a robust performance management cycle in place for you which includes the setting of challenging targets based on the school's priorities. Governors have a good overview of the school's performance, including the quality of teaching, as appraisal arrangements are now in place for all staff. The outcomes of this process are reported to them. You update governors regularly in meetings and through your headteacher's reports to governors about the performance of the school. The headteacher of the primary school provides excellent leadership support for you. For example, you regularly undertake paired monitoring activities to validate your judgements. Governors have good insight into how well different groups of children are achieving, because the tracking of children's progress is now rigorous. They know how the early years pupil premium funding (EYPP) is allocated effectively, which includes the provision of free school lunches, free access to the play scheme and resources for literacy and mathematics interventions. They know that this funding is boosting these children's progress.

You have created a dedicated team of staff who share your high expectations. Staff have forged an exemplary partnership with parents. Parents told me that staff listen to their views and concerns. They greatly appreciate how the school provides advice on how they can support their own child's education at home, through workshops and regular progress meetings to update them on their child's progress. Parents value the additional advice and guidance the school provides through close liaison with other agencies, including Citizens Advice and counselling services.

While the capacity to secure further improvements is clear from the upward trend in children's achievement and improvements in the quality of teaching and assessment, too much improvement work is left to you and governors. Staff have willingly taken on specific responsibilities such as making regular checks on planning and leading small-group interventions. Nevertheless, their roles are underdeveloped to make

sure there is wider responsibility for securing further success through monitoring and evaluating key aspects of the school's work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safeguarding policy reflects the latest statutory guidance. Children's safety is a top priority and the responsibility of everyone. The school undertakes regular risk assessments and is vigilant about all health and safety issues. All staff have paediatric first aid certificates. Parents have every confidence that the school's work to keep their child safe is effective. They have no qualms about leaving their child with their key worker, because they know that the welfare and safety of their child is paramount. Training for staff and governors ensures that they keep up to date on all safeguarding issues, including female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation, e-safety, and the prevention of extremism and radicalisation.

Inspection findings

- Our joint observations of children working and playing together confirm that the school is successful in developing confident, highly motivated and caring learners. Children cooperate well with each other and adults.
- The indoor and outdoor classrooms support children's learning and progress well, particularly their physical, personal and communication and language skills, including literacy. Indeed, communication and language, reading and writing have a high profile throughout the Nursery. This specific focus of your work is absolutely essential, because most children speak English as an additional language. Many children speak no or little English. Some children have speech delay as well as complex learning difficulties. The school has successfully addressed this area for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection.
- Adults are skilled in modelling effective language. They paraphrase children's language and use signs and symbols tailored specifically to individual children's level of need and language acquisition. Staff are building on this success, by improving their questioning skills to develop language for thinking, as a result of training from the educational psychologist.
- Children often make great strides in their language, including their phonics knowledge (phonics refers to letters and the sounds that they make). This promotes their early reading and writing skills well. Children have many opportunities to make marks on paper, whiteboards, and in a wide variety of different media. This gives them confidence, motivation and dexterity to begin to write for meaning.
- Staff develop a love of reading in the children, with imaginative books used to provide a context for their learning. The children take home a reading book each week. They are very keen to write about the adventures of 'Spencer the bear' with their parents if they are lucky enough to take him home for the weekend.

- All staff have an excellent understanding of where children are in their learning and development. They run a summer play school which most children who are admitted to the Nursery in September attend. Both parents and children develop a strong relationship with the child's allocated key worker and become familiar with the routines and expectations of the school. Consequently, children's learning gets off to a brisk start with no time wasted when they start school.
- Continual daily and half-termly assessments enable staff to build up an holistic picture of each child's strengths and areas for development. This information is used well to tailor activities to meet the needs and abilities of every child. Staff use the children's interests to provide relevant and motivating activities that secure children's concentration and perseverance. Observations are carefully recorded, as well as the children's next steps in their learning. Nonetheless, long-term targets are not reviewed regularly enough to make sure that progress is speeded up in mathematics, especially for the most-able children.
- You act quickly when children need additional support and liaise well with external agencies to secure early intervention and statutory funding through education, health and care plans. Individual educational programmes for children with special educational needs or disability confirm that they are effectively supported, through one-to-one adult support and a wide range of therapists, including for speech and language. The sensory room is an excellent resource for those children who have visual and hearing impairments.
- Staff appreciate the training and support they have, including opportunities to observe good or better practice in other schools. This includes advice and support from the early years leader in the partnership primary school. You encourage staff to be reflective practitioners. They are becoming adept at reviewing the quality of learning and are keen to try out new ideas as a result. However, there are too few members of staff who take on additional leadership responsibilities to support you and governors in your quest for excellence.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- long-term targets are reviewed more regularly, so that when children have achieved them, they are set additional targets to speed up their progress, especially for the most-able children in mathematics
- key members of staff are given training and support to develop their leadership skills, so that they are more involved in school improvement work.

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, three members of staff, a group of parents and members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. I also spoke to the head of school improvement for Harrow local authority. I visited the indoor classroom and outdoor area with you, and together we observed children working and playing. I also looked at some of the children's learning journals. I reviewed a number of documents including records of children's progress, parental questionnaires, minutes of governing body meetings and the school's monitoring of teaching and learning. I also scrutinised documentation relating to safeguarding.