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Suzanne Taylor
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Dear Suzanne Taylor

Short inspection of Hungerford Nursery School Centre for Children

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

You provide highly effective and thoughtful leadership. Together with the astute governing body, you find ways to continually refine and improve the school. Your ambitious plans do not compromise the existing high standards. They do, however, reflect your belief in the value of learning. There are abundant opportunities for staff and parents to build important skills and knowledge that help to improve children's achievement. Through this learning, there is a commitment from everyone to realise your school motto, to 'Be the best you can be'. As a result, the leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The school is at the heart of the community. Working closely with the on-site children's centre, you forge strong, lasting links with families that provide them with support from birth onwards. Parents describe you and the staff as, 'caring', 'passionate' and 'very approachable'. They also speak effusively about their children's experiences, such as the regular 'woodland visits', complete with singing on the bus. You have worked hard to secure manageable and effective ongoing communication between home and school. Video clips and photographs show parents how much their children are enjoying nursery. One parent said, 'There are happy smiles on every photo.' Another added, 'My daughter even asks if she can go to nursery at the weekend!'

You set high expectations for children's achievement and continually strive to exceed these. For example, you addressed the area for improvement identified at

the last inspection so that children's attainment in technology is now very high. Across all areas of learning in 2016, almost all children reached the expectations for their age. The very large majority exceeded these expected levels because staff want the very best for all children. Therefore, you have also ensured that different groups of children achieve extremely well, including those with special educational needs and/or disability, the most able, and disadvantaged children. Last year, most children made rapid and sustained progress across the areas of learning. Different groups of children made similarly high rates of progress because you expect nothing less.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors rightly describe safeguarding as the 'top priority'. You make sure that children's welfare is on everyone's mind, providing frequent training updates reflecting the latest guidance. Consequently, staff know what to do if they are concerned about a child. High-quality records are detailed and thorough, and through systematic checks you ensure that arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose. Governors keep a close eye on this, to assure themselves that effective practice is in place.

You work astutely with other colleagues to promote children's welfare. The family support team in the children's centre is an excellent source of help for parents and children. You use this well to provide trusted support when and where families most need it. Some parents spoke about the very positive impact that this has had on both their own and their children's lives. You also provide challenge to other professionals to secure the right actions to keep children safe.

Inspection findings

- You make changes shrewdly, so that they build on the excellent provision already in place. After the last inspection, you invested in new equipment such as tablets and interactive whiteboards to support children's learning in technology. You have introduced this carefully so that it does not dominate the classroom. Opportunities to use technology are woven into the curriculum so that children recognise it as a helpful tool. Consequently, last year, all children exceeded the expectations for their age in technology.
- As soon as children start at school, staff set to work to build parents' trust and effective working relationships. All parents benefit from workshops such as 'learning together' that show them how to help their child at home. Each child also receives a regular 'learning story' to share with their parents. These chart their achievements over time and set out important next steps for home and school. You guide parents so that they become partners in education.
- You also ensure that families understand the importance of attending school regularly. In particular, you have prioritised the good attendance of disadvantaged children, promoting the benefits of coming to school every day. Where necessary, you provide families with extra support to reduce children's absence. As a result, disadvantaged children have the highest rates of attendance of any group in school.

- Disadvantaged children get off to a flying start in the pre-nursery. These two-year-olds enter the nursery with skills and abilities that are often well below those typical for their age. Key workers form close and effective relationships with children quickly. This helps children to feel secure and benefit from this high-quality support. Staff are adept at promoting children's language development, choosing the right level of communication for each child. For example, one adult showed a child how to make the sound of a car while playing on the toy road. Consequently, disadvantaged two-year-olds make rapid gains in speaking.
- Teaching provides children with plenty of opportunities to secure essential skills and knowledge to succeed. Staff regularly repeat language and use rhymes and songs to support children's learning. In one lesson, the children were learning to tell the story of the three little pigs. The nursery nurse encouraged children to sing parts of the story and add their own words to describe the wolf. This followed an effective opportunity for children to play with the wolf and pig puppets outside. Through regular practice, all children learn the patterns of language, supporting their future reading and writing skills. Last year, the vast majority of children, including disadvantaged children, reached the expected level of development.
- Disadvantaged children receive highly effective personalised support. You have introduced individual support plans that set out what each child needs to achieve next and how staff will help them achieve this. Staff review these often and refine their support so that disadvantaged children make rapid progress. Disadvantaged children also benefit from extra support sessions on their own or in groups with others. You carefully analyse the impact of additional sessions such as 'dino-school', to ensure that they improve children's outcomes. All disadvantaged children receive support that matches their needs closely, including the most able disadvantaged. Consequently, the early years pupil premium is spent extremely well.
- You expect staff to challenge and extend children's learning. As a result, most children's attainment exceeds the standards expected for their age. Almost all staff are currently learning how to extend children's language whenever they interact. This was evident in one activity. Children worked closely with an adult to explore and chop vegetables to make soup. At the same time, they also discussed how beans grow and learned about the bean pod.
- The curriculum is suitably demanding for all abilities, including the most able. Lesson plans show that leaders expect children to complete increasingly complex tasks as they move through the year. For example, at the start of the year the 'welcome circle', at the beginning of the day, is a time for children to practise routines and choose activities. By the end of the year, children are expected to plan their learning with a partner in the 'welcome circle'. Adults also use children's interests to promote deep thinking. Recently, some children worked with an adult to consider the question, 'Can a boy wear a dress?' Staff ensure phonics activities match all children's learning needs closely. Staff teach children the links between their activities and what they will learn to do next. One teacher said, 'These sounds will help you learn to read – how exciting!' Indeed, by the time they

left the school last year, a few children were able to read simple books independently.

- Most-able children make rapid progress because teachers use assessment well to identify children's next steps and provide them with sufficient challenge. This includes the most able disadvantaged pupils. In one activity some children had built a tower of blocks and were jumping off it. The teacher had prompted the children to consider how far they were jumping. One child marked each landing carefully with the accuracy of an Olympic official. Another child got an extra tape measure. The teacher showed the children how to use it and supported a child to answer his own question about how a longer jump could be measured. He set about using two tapes.
- The local authority recognises that the school has many strengths. Recently the school improvement advisor provided helpful advice to improve governors' oversight of the school development plan. The local authority has made some use of your expertise, enabling you to work with some other schools. Nevertheless, they rightly recognise that leaders could share their skills and knowledge more widely for the benefit of all.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- work to share good practice with other providers is developed further.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for West Berkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Dulon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, three governors and a representative of the local authority. I visited all classes jointly with you, to see the children learning and to speak to staff. Together, we considered how well you had addressed the area for improvement identified at the last inspection, how effective support for disadvantaged pupils is, how well teaching promotes the achievement of the most able children and how the children's centre supports your work to keep children safe. I took into account responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as speaking to a number of parents during the school day. I evaluated a range of documents, including children's progress information.