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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



29 November 2016

Mrs Sacha Walker-Byrne
Headteacher
Fairfield Nursery School
Fairfield Street
Accrington
Lancashire
BB5 0LD

Dear Mrs Walker-Byrne

Short inspection of Fairfield Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 10 November 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. The school was also judged to be outstanding at its three previous inspections.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your school truly is a wonderful place for children to learn and play. You and your team are uncompromising in your ambition for all children who attend the nursery to achieve their very best. Inclusion is exceptionally well promoted and the uniqueness of each child is recognised and respected.

All staff, including yourself, are deeply reflective about their practice. Your local authority adviser was very keen to tell me that staff are 'constantly looking for ways to improve'. As the result of a highly effective key person system, you and your staff have an in-depth knowledge about individual families and children's likes, dislikes and capabilities.

Speedy action is taken to address any shortcomings. For example, an underperformance in mathematics was immediately addressed through training from educational consultants and the local authority. Staff also visited a resource centre to get ideas on how mathematics could be better promoted in children's independent play areas. As a result of your quick response, outcomes in mathematics have significantly improved. You have also recently identified that boys' reading and writing skills are not as good as those of girls. I would agree with this analysis and already the wheels are being put in motion to address this issue.

Alongside your staff you work very effectively with parents. The hours that the

nursery operates centres on their needs. Parents talked of the very effective transition from home to nursery. They typically commented that, 'steady settling in procedures are reassuring and don't overload the child'. The variety of workshops and experiences that you provide for parents to help them develop their children's learning at home are very much appreciated. A testament to your school, I believe, is expressed eloquently in the following comment: 'I cannot praise the staff highly enough. It is an excellent school.'

Throughout the day, I observed very happy children who were extremely confident, keen to learn and independent. They share wonderful relationships with their key person, other adults and their peers. As they play, children share and take turns beautifully. Squabbles are rare because children are so busy.

You have the full backing of all of your staff. They feel highly valued and well supported. Through your encouragement and mentoring many staff feel empowered to develop their roles in education. You even provide a research library to help with their studies. They consider that you are 'doing a really good job' as a headteacher.

Following the last inspection, the school was asked to ensure that staff take every opportunity to develop children's understanding of letters and sounds. You have embraced this challenge. All staff have now had training on the teaching of phonics and a tracking system has been introduced. Great care has also been taken to ensure that core books are available in individual play areas to help develop children's awareness of phonics.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements for children have high priority. Entrance to the premises is secure. A password system is in place should anyone not known to staff collect children at the end of the session. Robust checks on staff's suitability to work with children are undertaken. Meticulous documentation with regard to safeguarding is maintained. All staff have completed safeguarding training and know how to identify children who are at risk. Staff are also well aware of potential indicators of the latest national concerns of radicalisation, sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. All staff have read part one of 'Keeping children safe in education' and copies of this document are readily available in each of the classrooms. Those with responsibility for safeguarding have completed training at the appropriate level. As designated lead, you also understand that either you or your deputy must be on the premises when the school is open to deal with any safeguarding concerns. A filtering system is in place which further ensures children's safety when accessing computer technology. Workshops have also been provided for parents to help develop their awareness of online safety.

Inspection findings

- Children's well-being is at the heart of the school's work. As such, you have ensured that your staff have a very secure understanding of the underlying principles of early years education and of the importance of learning through play.

- I was impressed by how well you know your school. We discussed in detail its many strengths and priorities for development. Targets to meet these goals are clearly set out in the school development plan and are regularly monitored and reviewed.
- From low starting points, all groups of children, including those who are disadvantaged and the most able, make rapid progress in their learning and achieve very well.
- You keep an eagle eye on the quality of teaching. This is done through formal lesson observations, learning walks, planning reviews and scrutinies of children's work. Keeping teachers' skills up to date is also high on your list of priorities. Consequently, you ensure that all staff access regular and appropriate training.
- The progress that children make is also very closely monitored and tracked. Examples of children's work are beautifully displayed in learning journeys, which are easily accessible for both parents and children to review.
- An innovative approach has been taken to the planning of activities with children guiding their own learning. Staff are exceptionally well deployed in independent play areas to facilitate this process through high-quality interactions. Focused activities are planned and adapted to meet the needs of different abilities, including the most able. Furthermore, plans are in place to set up provision targeted solely at those children who are identified as gifted and talented.
- The quality of the learning environment is superb and contributes significantly to the rapid progress that children make. Play rooms are well laid out and spacious, allowing children to move around freely. There is a strong emphasis on providing children with high-quality natural resources.
- Learning at your school is magical and fun. No learning time is wasted. The morning starts with a music and movement session which children relish. As they play, children count in sequence, identify shapes and colours and solve simple mathematical problems. Language skills are very well promoted as children feel and describe the texture of mushrooms, leeks, aubergines, leaves and pine cones. Books are available all around the nursery to develop children's love of reading. I observed children looking at books on their own for pleasure. Others enjoyed listening to a story read by an adult as part of a group. Children develop a sense of awe and wonder, as they press buttons on a remote control and watch the colour of bubbles in the large vertical tube change. Activities are exciting, cover all areas of learning and totally capture and sustain children's interest.
- Children play outdoors in all weathers, suitably clothed to protect them from the elements. Forest school activities are very popular with the children and exceptionally well managed with regard to risk. For example, children are taught not to eat berries, throw stones or touch the nettles. Looking after the rabbits, chickens and guinea pigs that live outdoors helps children to develop a kind and caring attitude to animals.
- Good use is made of the pupil premium money to support disadvantaged children and allow them to participate in all that the school has to offer. All of your staff clearly understand the barriers that prevent these children from learning. You are well aware that some of this funding must be specifically targeted at those

disadvantaged children who learn more quickly in order to drive their learning forward at a pace.

- You describe attendance as a 'roller coaster' and I agree that this continues to be a thorny issue. However, as a result of the concerted efforts, by you and your staff, it is improving. For example, you all make parents aware that not attending school will impact negatively on their children's learning. Furthermore, if children's attendance falls below 80%, for reasons which are not justifiable, families receive a home visit to offer support.
- You recognise the importance of working closely and collaboratively with other nursery schools and early years professionals to offer support and challenge to each other. For example, if families are experiencing difficulties you refer them to the children's centre. Working with other nursery schools, you have taken a group of teachers to Italy to look at alternative early years practice. You also support other nursery headteachers to develop their leadership skills. With your encouragement, your staff plan to deliver workshops on enhancing children's creativity to which all early years providers in the locality are invited.
- Governors are as passionate about the school as you are. They know it well and are regular visitors. Although very supportive, they are not afraid to ask challenging questions or make difficult decisions with regard to the budget so that the school remains sustainable.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes for boys in reading and writing match those of girls.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held meetings with you and members of the governing body. I also had informal discussions with a group of parents and staff. A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority. I went on a tour of the school to see the learning that was taking place. Behaviour was observed at different times of the day. I reviewed a range of documentation including the single central record, the school's

self-evaluation and development plan. Account was taken of the responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire completed by parents and the school's own questionnaire to parents.

I considered how well the school had responded to the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. The progress and achievement that all groups of children make was also considered. I looked at what steps had been taken by you to ensure that the quality of teaching remained of the highest standard. Safeguarding arrangements were looked at to ensure that they were effective and up to date with recent guidance. Furthermore, I reviewed the spending of the early years pupil premium to ensure it was impacting positively on those children who are entitled to it. Finally, I considered the work of the governors to assess the level of support and challenge offered to the school.