

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Rachel Fagan
Headteacher
Oxhey Early Years Centre
Eastbury Road
Oxhey
Watford
WD19 4RL

Dear Mrs Fagan

Short inspection of Oxhey Early Years Centre

Following my visit to the school on 13 December 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. The nursery provides a wonderful place for children to play, develop and make new friends. A highly stimulating environment provides excellent opportunities for children to learn across all areas of learning, both indoors and outside. As a result, children make good and often outstanding progress during their time with you. Parents are fully supportive of your leadership and are rightly proud of the nursery. During this inspection, many were desperate to tell me about how highly they value the nursery's work, and how well their children are developing as a result of the high quality provision. All 76 of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent. Staff are also fully supportive of your leadership and value the opportunities that they receive to further develop their expertise, through external courses and training held at the school. However, you are not complacent. Along with your staff team you are constantly looking for ways to further improve provision so that children get the very best start to their school life.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the way that staff reinforce and strengthen learning, through the feedback that they provide when engaged in discussions with children. This is now a strength of the school. A strong focus on communication has led to significant improvements in the support that

adults provide in developing children's language. Adults are now highly skilled in the way that they observe learning, and intervene skilfully to question and probe children's understanding. During this inspection many high-quality interactions were observed in which adults modelled good speech, and listened carefully to the responses that children made in order to fully assess children's levels of knowledge and understanding.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's policies and procedures successfully promote an environment where children feel safe and behave very well. Stringent checks are made on all adults who work with children and these are recorded meticulously on the school's central record. All members of staff are provided with training that is appropriate to their role. Procedures for dealing with child protection issues are effective and regularly reviewed. Staff fully understand how to respond if they have any concerns about a child. All parents who responded to Parent View said that their children are well looked after and feel safe while at school.

Inspection findings

- Children get off to an excellent start at Oxhey Early Years Centre. Staff get to know children before they start at the nursery, through home visits and discussions with parents about their children's interests and levels of development. The partnership between home and school continues through the year and is highly valued by parents. All parents who responded to Parent View said that their children make good progress while at the school.
- Children's conduct and behaviour is exceptionally good. During the first few weeks, staff ensure that children understand and follow the nursery's routines: looking after themselves, taking responsibility for accessing and tidying resources and taking care of each other. Children listen attentively, and are sensitive and respectful towards each other and the adults who teach them. They often show maturity beyond their years, demonstrating perseverance and good levels of concentration when engaged in learning. Children develop extremely positive attitudes to learning during their time in the nursery, which prepares them well for the next stage of their education.
- The excellent relationships help to ensure that children enjoy school and do not have to worry about their well-being. Staff also ensure that children understand how and when to take measured risks. They do not shy away from giving children opportunities to do this in their play and learning, through trips in the locality and exciting activities within the nursery grounds. This is recognised by parents, one of whom wrote on Parent View, 'It is a nurturing environment where managed risks are allowed, which has enriched our son's life immensely.'
- The quality of the learning environment is excellent and contributes to the rapid progress that most children make. Staff are keen to ensure that as children settle into the nursery they learn to take responsibility for their decisions and actions. This is reflected in the well-organised areas, both

inside and outside, which are spacious and easily accessible to children.

- Adults plan effectively to ensure that children have regular opportunities to take part in activities across all areas of learning. Accurate assessments, which are based on high-quality interactions between adults and children, enable staff to plan activities which are suitably challenging.
- Detailed evidence is kept of each child's progress across all areas of learning in children's records known as 'learning journals'. These records have recently been put online so that parents are able to find out about the activities that children have been engaged in and, on occasions, contribute to their child's assessments. The information in the 'learning journeys' is used to identify individual children's needs and to build on their particular interests and abilities.
- The school makes good use of the additional funding it receives to support disadvantaged children. Staff understand the barriers that can prevent these children from learning and, where issues are identified, swift action is taken to intervene so that children do not fall too far behind.
- School leaders keep a careful check on how well different groups of children are achieving. They know, for example, that boys are not performing as well as girls in many areas of learning and have put strategies in place to support boys' progress as a result. However, leaders do not give sufficient attention to the achievement of the most able children. Although these children generally make good progress, leaders acknowledge that more could be done and that achievement for this group of children could be even higher.
- Staff are highly trained and fully committed to the school. Those spoken to during the inspection, and all of those who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, said that they are proud to work at the school. They said that they have a clear understanding of the goals which the school aims to achieve and that leaders use professional development well to encourage, challenge and support their improvement.
- The governing body provides a good level of support and challenge to senior leaders. Governors visit regularly to see for themselves how the school's policies and procedures are put into practice. The governing body checks on the effectiveness of safeguarding and fulfils its statutory duties well.

Next steps for the school

- Leaders and governors should ensure that teachers track more carefully the progress made by the most able children so that they are provided with even greater levels of challenge and more children make outstanding progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hertfordshire. This letter will

be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I focused on the following key lines of enquiry during this inspection:

- Have leaders maintained the outstanding provision and outstanding outcomes identified at the previous inspection?
- How effective is the school's approach to safeguarding children?
- How well the school had responded to the area for improvement that was identified at the last inspection.
- What is the impact of pupil premium funding on children's achievement?

During the inspection, I met with you, the two members of the teaching staff and four other practitioners. I met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I visited classrooms to observe teaching and learning and speak to children about their work. I briefly attended two nativity plays and observed children's behaviour around the nursery. I talked to parents and considered the 76 responses to Parent View, and the free text responses submitted. I also scrutinised the 12 responses from staff to Ofsted's online questionnaire. I looked at a wide range of documentation, including your improvement planning and information about children's progress. I also scrutinised the safeguarding policy, the single central record of staff checks and other records and procedures aimed at keeping children safe.