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Fiona Bridger-Wilkinson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bridger-Wilkinson

Short inspection of Victoria Park Nursery School & Children's Centre

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2017, 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 nursery school was judged to be outstanding in September 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The impact of your leadership is evident in the excellent outcomes for children who are currently in the school. Staff, both new and experienced, recognise and support your clear vision to develop children's confidence, independence and enthusiasm for life-long learning. Staff plan interesting and challenging activities as every child's learning and personal development really matters to them.

You are well supported by your leadership team and the governors. The assistant headteacher works closely with staff, modelling best practice and providing useful feedback to help them become even more effective practitioners. Your work is highly valued by governors and they recognise your achievement in sustaining a high standard of education and care for the children. Members of the governing body make frequent visits to see the school in action and fulfil their statutory duties, showing high levels of commitment.

Parents are rightly delighted with the support and care their children receive and the progress they make. They appreciate the excellent transition and induction arrangements which enable their children to settle quickly, make good relationships with adults and peers, and feel part of a group.

You have taken effective action to tackle the area for improvement identified in the previous inspection – linking assessment to the next steps in children's learning. You have

put in place robust procedures for assessment that support not only children's learning, but also their levels of well-being and involvement in activities. An example of this is the assessment of children's language skills, highlighting which children need specialist support in developing their speech and language. Similarly, learning diaries for each child contain observations of a range of activities that show progress in areas of learning, such as understanding of the world. These observations are shared with parents to support them in complementing the work carried out in the Nursery.

Leaders are rigorous in their assessment of the school's effectiveness and identify the right priorities for improvement. For example, the recent changes to the way in which you track children's progress are helping leaders and staff to know exactly how well pupils are progressing. You rightly recognise that further refining of the system will enable you to monitor children's progress in each of the specific areas of learning. At the time of your last inspection, the promotion of children's spiritual, moral and cultural development was identified as a significant strength of the school. This continues to be the case. Other strengths that you, and your leadership team, have sustained are the excellent routines and behaviour of children.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and meet statutory requirements. Staff and parents say wholeheartedly that children are safe, happy and well nurtured. You hold detailed records of children causing concern and carefully track all communication with families and external agencies. You have worked tirelessly to be confident that site security systems are well established. Children are carefully supervised on arrival and at home time, ensuring that every child is safe. You carry out risk assessments regularly and the staff check the safety of the equipment and environment every day. You rightly ensure that children learn to keep themselves safe. To make them aware, you encourage them to evaluate the risks they encounter when, for example, they use plastic knives or scissors. Staff and governors have received training on safeguarding children and know what to do if they have concerns. Staff understand that they are all responsible for safeguarding children and discuss concerns promptly with you.

Inspection findings

- Planning and assessment support the next steps in children's learning very well. Through skilful planning, staff provide a variety of interesting resources for everyday activities which children use to explore new ideas.
- Teaching staff accurately assess children's levels of involvement in planned activities. They communicate effectively as a team to identify children who could be more involved, and how to support them to move forward in their learning.
- The learning and development needs of all age ranges of children are met extremely well. Teachers and early years practitioners have a very secure understanding of the age group they are working with. They have consistently high expectations of what each child can achieve, including the most able and the most able disadvantaged children. Learning activities are very well structured to meet the needs of children with low, middle and high ability, helping them all to make very good progress.

- The quality of the learning environment, particularly indoors, is superb. The resources that you provide are exciting and easily accessible. This enables children, including the very young ones, to make independent choices about play and to learn from older children. In addition, timely and meaningful intervention from adults enables them to thrive in the rich, nurturing learning environment. The younger age groups are supported very well by their older peers as they play together.
- All children make at least good progress from their starting points, and more than half make outstanding progress. They achieve very well, both in learning and in personal development. You check that this is the case for all pupils and groups of pupils, so no one slips through the net.
- Children whose circumstances make them vulnerable receive high-quality support from learning support assistants as well as key workers. They participate in nurturing activities such as the breakfast club. Staff provide time and space for these children to communicate thoughts, ideas and feelings to adults, whether through words, pictures or actions.
- Children who receive additional government funding make the same outstanding progress as others and differences compared with other children are diminishing.
- The excellent working relationship with the special needs class on-site continues to lead to effective joint working and sharing of expertise that benefits children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The most able children are challenged to think critically and make rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding. For example, a group of most-able children, using the story of Handa's Surprise, were able to count reliably and match numerals to 12. They could sequence the events in the story using meaningful sentences.
- The consistently high expectations that teachers have leads to all children, regardless of their starting point, making excellent progress. For example, a nursery nurse successfully extended a child's imagination when he was burying 'treasure' in the sand, referring to pirate ships and treasure maps.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further refine the new tracking system so they can see at a glance how well children are progressing in each of the specific areas of learning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing board, 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

Kusum Trikha
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, two members of the governing board, including the chair, and the adviser from the local authority. I also had informal discussions with parents to seek their views of the school. With you, I observed teaching and learning, both indoors and outside. I looked at examples of children's work and spoke to the children. I also reviewed a range of documentation, including the single central record, leaders' own evaluations of the school's effectiveness, the development plan and records of the progress children make. I also took account of responses to the online Ofsted questionnaires completed by 35 parents and 15 staff.