

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



14 March 2017

Mrs Pauline M Kirtley  
Headteacher  
Heath Lane Nursery School  
Heath Lane  
Hemel Hempstead  
Hertfordshire  
HP1 1TT

Dear Mrs Kirtley

### **Short inspection of Heath Lane Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 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 school was judged to be good in October 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 identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school accurately. Your improvement plans show that you are working effectively to address any aspects that need to get better. You set high expectations for children and they make good progress across all areas of learning. Working with other staff members, you have successfully addressed the areas of improvement from the previous inspection. For example, staff now plan much more successfully for the needs of children. You diligently seek out ways to make teaching and learning even better.

Heath Lane Nursery School provides a warm and nurturing environment for children from the age of three. Children are happy and settled in their classes. They form positive relationships with adults, underpinned by good care and support.

Parents and carers appreciate the school and all it does for their children. All the parents I spoke to, and the overwhelming majority of those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, were positive about the school. They believe that the staff are approachable and they recognise that their children make good progress and thrive. Parents particularly like the many opportunities that children have to learn outside. Learning in the forest school and the rest of the outdoor environment strongly promotes children's personal, social and physical development. Children develop a good understanding of the world around them.

The role of key workers is now firmly established and is effective. Parents, carers and children know who they can talk to if they need help or support. Key persons know the needs of their group and use this information to plan appropriate learning activities.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and the school keeps appropriate records. The business manager diligently checks the suitability of adults to work with children and records this carefully. A governor conducts audits to check that this process is robust and thorough. Recruitment processes are rigorous and ensure that safeguarding is given a high priority. Staff are suitably trained to recognise possible signs that a child is in danger of harm. This includes child protection, first aid and 'Prevent' duty training.

The school acts quickly when they have concerns about a child. The close relationships with parents and knowledge of families contribute to the good care the school provides. Adults take appropriate and swift action, including to involve other agencies, in child protection matters and your records reflect this.

### **Inspection findings**

- In order to ascertain whether the school remains good, I identified a number of key lines of enquiry with you. The first of these was about how ably staff plan for the needs of children. We chose this as a focus because it was an area for improvement from the previous inspection. You have reviewed the way that the teaching and learning is planned. You decided that the fixed programme of topics over the year was not always meeting the needs of children. Your staff now plan much more closely for the needs and interests of the children. In addition, you ensure that high-quality, short-term plans are informed by observations of children at work and include input from parents and carers. The curriculum is more dynamic and changes as the needs and interests of the cohort change and develop. When the climbing frame became a superhero den, this encouraged some of the boys to write signs to keep 'baddies' out because mark making was relevant to their play.
- You and your staff track children's progress carefully across all areas of learning. Staff use this information to plan activities to meet children's emerging needs. For instance, this year a teacher noticed that expressive arts and design was emerging as an area of relative weakness. As a result, staff provided more opportunities for children to develop their skills, for example by providing more junk modelling opportunities, to good effect.
- Another way that staff try to ensure that they meet children's needs is by setting next step targets for them. However, the targets are not as helpful as they could be because they are not tailored consistently well to children's needs. This system is having some positive impact but it is not fully developed.
- The second line of enquiry was about the progress of the most able children. Again, this was an area for improvement from the previous inspection. Staff are

aware of the need to identify and challenge the most able children to achieve their best. You have set higher expectations for these children to ensure that they make better than expected progress. This is working successfully. Last year, for instance, the vast majority of these children made four steps of progress from their high starting points in communication and language, physical, personal, social and emotional development. The minimum expected level of progress in the school is three steps. You agree that you need to do more to ensure that governors have good oversight of the school's work to address the needs of the most able. You plan to present more assessment information to them regularly so that they can check the progress of this group.

- The third line of enquiry considered how rigorously you hold key workers to account for the progress of children. You have now introduced regular progress meetings with the key workers. In these meetings, you discuss every child to ensure that no one is left behind and to identify those that need additional support to catch up. This is working successfully. All staff are aware of your high expectations and they do all they can to meet them. There is now a real focus on progress for individuals and for groups that might not do as well as they could.
- The final line of enquiry was about the progress of the disadvantaged children entitled to the early years pupil premium funding. I found that you have made good provision for these children based on what you know about their needs and this is proving successful.
- Disadvantaged children make good progress at the school. This group is given high priority by adults. Pupil premium funds have been used to train staff in effective one-to-one support for reading and language development, and to promote confidence. Key workers identify needs accurately and ensure that children have the support and help they require. The governors track this group carefully and ask relevant questions to understand how well they are doing. Over the first term in school this year almost all of this group have made at least expected progress and a significant proportion are doing better than this.
- The school's website does not include all of the statutory requirements for published information. It does not include the roles and responsibilities of governors or the barriers to learning for disadvantaged children.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the governing body has all the information it needs to challenge the school robustly for the provision and progress of the most able children
- the school's procedures to meet the needs of the most able children are fully effective
- the school's website includes all of the information it is required to provide for parents.

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

Michelle Winter  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and your business manager and staff at the school. I also met with a group of governors.

I scrutinised various sources of information, including your assessment data and school improvement plan. I also viewed the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, and the records of checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children. With you, I visited all classes and observed learning, viewed work in children's learning journey books and on display. I also spoke with children about their learning.

I spoke to some parents and took account of the 18 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. I also took account of the nine responses to the staff questionnaire.