

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Julian Rogers
Headteacher
Brunel Nursery School
Cambridge Street
Blackburn
Lancashire
BB1 1ES

Dear Mr Julian Rogers

Short inspection of Brunel Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education at Brunel Nursery since the previous inspection. The nursery has operated as part of a hard federation with St Matthew's Church of England Primary School since 2010. You, senior leaders and governors are all highly ambitious for the success of the nursery. You rightly believe that if children do well in Brunel then they are set up for success in the future. Successful action since the previous inspection pays testimony to your vision of each child being unique.

You, your deputy headteacher and your early years leader use your complementary skills to work closely together to realise your vision for the nursery. You have an insightful and realistic understanding of the strengths of the nursery and the aspects you wish to make even better. Your self-evaluation document is an honest account of this understanding and leads seamlessly to your improvement plan.

High morale among staff characterises Brunel. Staff work together as a team. This teamwork provides a good role model for children and reinforces the motto 'learning together' that underpins the work of the nursery. Staff appreciate the opportunities to further their professional knowledge and skills, improve their practice and provide better learning for children.

You have created and nurtured very trusting relationships with parents. Parents are very happy to leave their children with nursery staff as they can see how much they care for the children. Your nursery teacher spends time with parents before children

join the nursery to collect basic details. We agreed that this time could be used more productively to capture more detailed information about what their child likes and can do, so that staff have a clear assessment of each child as they start nursery, and can build learning around this information from the start. You provide termly reports giving parents in-depth information about their children's progress and how they can help them at home. Returned comment slips show parents are very happy with this arrangement.

Indoor and outdoor areas are exciting with good-quality resources. Children can access what they need easily. The classroom is spacious and well laid out so that children can move about freely and safely. Children behave very well, taking turns, sharing and listening to each other. It is clear that they like to be with each other; one little girl said that her favourite thing in the nursery was her friends.

You successfully tackled the areas for improvement from your previous inspection with fervour. You can see the effect of this work in an increased number of children, including the most able, making good progress across their time in the nursery. Additionally, teaching assistants are included in the process for managing staff performance which has improved their knowledge of their role and contribution to children's learning. Governors receive useful information so they can check the increased effectiveness of staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding is high priority and everyone's responsibility. Rigorous checks are undertaken to make sure that all staff and governors are suitable to work with children. Governors discuss safeguarding at each governing body meeting. All staff are up to date with training and current guidance. Staff receive training annually and updates regularly throughout the year. Clear systems are in place for reporting any concerns and staff know that anyone can make a referral to the relevant authorities if they have any worries about a child's welfare. Staff work very effectively with external agencies to keep children safe.

Children are trusting of staff and are happy in their care. Parents consider their children to be safe. For example, children are personally handed over to their parents at the end of a session; if someone else is collecting a child they have to use a password before staff allow the child to leave.

Inspection findings

- A key focus of the inspection was to consider whether teachers use records of how well children learn to plan further activities. You have introduced a straightforward, practical assessment system which provides you with the information needed to track the progress that children are making. This process covers the nursery, and the Reception class in St Matthew's so that there is a smooth transition as children start school. You have set a clear guide to the rate of progress you expect children to make over a term.

- You and senior leaders have led training to strengthen the staff's knowledge of how to check children's progress. Because leaders showed staff how to check children's progress during a session, nursery staff are now more confident at assessing what children can do. Assessment information is captured in children's learning books and used to plan future activities across all areas of learning. Information is also used termly to identify which aspects of learning are stronger or weaker. Swift action is taken to plan activities to support the weaker aspects of learning.
- You hold termly progress meetings with the nursery teacher who collects progress information from all teaching assistants so that you can identify where children need extra support. For example, when you noticed that children were not making enough progress in mathematics, you arranged training from an early years specialist, with expertise in mathematics. Action taken has improved the progress children are now making in this subject.
- The early years leader observes practice in the nursery more regularly and gives comprehensive, written feedback. Staff appreciate the affirmation of the strengths of their practice and knowing what needs to improve.
- All groups of children, including the most able, make good progress. Your staff have taken steps to make sure the most able are challenged by planning an extra activity for this group. However, for all groups of children, there are missed opportunities when staff could more readily intervene to illustrate language skills and widen children's vocabulary.
- Behaviour is excellent in the nursery. Children settle quickly and are confident with the well-established routines. They are kind and listen to adults and each other. Staff promote children's understanding of safety through stories and visitors. Staff work very effectively with external agencies to ensure that children receive the support they need.
- You monitor attendance assiduously. When children start at the nursery you send a friendly letter to parents stressing the importance of attendance, together with the policy. This sets the scene for the future. Throughout the year, newsletters remind parents about how absence affects their children's progress. Parents especially like the way in which attendance is rewarded. When children have attended for a whole week, their photograph is tastefully displayed in the waiting area for all to admire.
- Through frequent visits, governors know the nursery well. Learning walks enable them to check that funding, including early years pupil premium funding, is used effectively. Information on children's achievement and attendance is discussed at the achievement committee meeting. This information, together with learning walks, enables governors to know how well children are doing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff obtain more detailed information from parents about what their children like

and can do when they start school

- staff use opportunities to extend children's language skills and vocabulary.

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

Yours sincerely

Eileen Mulgrew
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher, the leader for early years and the inclusion coordinator to discuss improvements since the last inspection. You and I visited the nursery class to observe the variety of activities taking place. I spoke with 10 parents at the start of the day and considered three responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey. I spoke with staff and read their survey responses. I met with four members of the governing body and discussed the school's work with a representative of the local authority.

I looked at children's learning books and examples of their work on display around the school. I read the self-evaluation document, school improvement plan, an external review of the school and a sample of governing body minutes and your reports to the governing body. I read the information on the school website and scrutinised the school's record of checks made to confirm the suitability of adults to work with children.