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21 April 2017

Mrs Sally Brisley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Brisley

Short inspection of Woodcroft Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team, including governors, has maintained and secured the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in September 2016, you have wasted no time in sharing your knowledge and experience with your team, ensuring that the welfare of the individual child is at the heart of the school. You demonstrate a commitment to early years learning by providing flexible opportunities for pre-school children to attend various sessions so that they can access school more readily when they are older. Parents are extremely positive about the school and the improvements you are making.

All children make good progress, particularly in personal, social and emotional development. Your 'extension groups' ensure that children, particularly those who are disadvantaged, most able or have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good and better progress from their starting points. Children are very well supported at Woodcroft Nursery to do the best they can.

Since the previous inspection, you have further developed teaching and learning to focus on the needs and interests of individual children. You have created a culture that focuses on every child being unique. Inspection evidence shows that teachers skilfully match children's individual needs to their interests and personal experiences. For example, the mud kitchen enables children to work with an adult making a stew using vegetables, and saucepans and other utensils. The language used focuses on developing and extending vocabulary while finding opportunities to

build knowledge and develop number skills by naming the different vegetables and counting the number of items in the stew.

Children are encouraged to use and observe the natural resources around them. They do this creatively, whether placing pebbles, fir cones and shells in a frame to create a piece of art, or when looking for signs of spring in and around the school gardens, demonstrating a creative and enquiring mind.

You successfully involve parents in their child's learning by regularly sharing their child's progress with them. The information gathered about the individual gives a holistic view of the child. This results in teaching staff being able to respond quickly to the needs and interests of children.

With the strong emphasis on 'learning in the moment', capturing the interest of a child at the current time to maximise their progress, a range of resources and activities needs to be available. You have ensured that children have access to a wide range of resources to support all areas of learning across the school, for independent and adult-led activities.

Governors are extremely supportive and positive about the school and the improvements you have made in such a short time as headteacher. They share your vision and talk passionately about future plans for the school to further improve outcomes for all children. Governors know how well the children are performing from focused visits, the detailed headteacher's report you provide and the termly evaluation of teachers' planning as well as the assessment information provided at governors' meetings. They can talk confidently about the different groups of children and the progress they are making.

Although teachers hold themselves accountable for children's learning and the progress they make, they do not yet contribute specifically to areas of the school development plan. Taking on new responsibilities will enable them to develop not only their teaching and learning skills, but also their leadership skills. This is an area which you agree would increase leadership capacity across the school team. Although the school development plan is detailed, you also agreed that it would benefit from being more precise so that it details the expected and measurable impact on children's outcomes and links with staff performance targets.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safer recruitment arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. All files contain relevant information, ensuring that those adults who work with children have the necessary qualifications and safeguarding checks.

Systems and processes for safeguarding vulnerable children are effective. Staff know the children very well and there is a clear process for all staff to communicate concerns. Children's files are kept safe and are ordered, showing a chronology of actions for every case.

Provision for two-year-olds is effective and children are well cared for. Supervision meets statutory requirements and adults are vigilant at all times. Facilities, policies and risk assessments for this age group meet requirements. As a result, children are safe and well cared for.

Inspection findings

- The previous inspection report highlighted the need for staff to use children's targets more and to record which stage of development the children are working at. Therefore, this became my first line of enquiry. Leaders and teachers track the progress children make from their individual starting points. They regularly meet to discuss the progress all children are making and to set targets that will move children's learning on. All staff are aware of the children's targets, which are specific and individual. Staff plan activities and carry out observations to assess the progress children are making against their targets. Teaching staff know the children extremely well and detailed tracking sheets show clearly which age band the child is working at.
- The facility to record assessment information electronically enables a child's progress to be shared with all those involved with the child. Information is current, and ongoing assessment information provides the school and parents with an accurate picture of the child's learning. Parents say that they are very well informed about what their child can do. They are able to reinforce the learning at home and consequently some children make accelerated progress. Inspection evidence collected from observing the children in independent and adult-led activities and the school's own assessment and tracking information show that the school has an accurate view of where the children are in their learning.
- My second line of enquiry looked at the way teachers use assessment to plan future learning for all groups of children, ensuring that children make as much progress as they can. Teachers plan activities well to support these areas of learning and subsequently build on what children know. For example, teaching staff support children to retell a story using actions and repetition so that they begin to understand story structure and sequencing, as well as intonation and expression. Children engage well with these activities, developing their confidence in a group, using actions and peer support to help them remember. During an independent learning activity, a child was able to explain clearly and with confidence that the rabbit she was making, 'is the rabbit that got lost and then the fox helped her to find her way home'. This shows how teaching successfully extends learning, first in sessions that provide support to retell a story and then ensuring that there are opportunities that enable children to build on that process independently and creatively.
- Teachers provide open-ended and practical tasks to stretch and challenge the

most able and the most able disadvantaged children by encouraging them to extend their thinking. I observed a teacher facilitating an activity where a group of children were encouraged to think, and then describe, what might have happened to the troll in the story of 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff', once he had landed in the water. All children were confident to communicate their very creative ideas enthusiastically among their peers. They then developed their thinking further using a variety of materials. One child selected some thread saying, 'this could be a rescue line to help the troll out of the water', while another selected leaves from the garden area to represent a tree for the troll to hold onto.

- Children who speak English as an additional language make particularly good progress from their starting points in all areas of communication and language. Teaching staff model good use of language and encourage independence through praise, and questioning during activities. Adults are continually reviewing their practice to ensure that children are supported to make the best progress they can. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well by all adults. The use of sign language by adults and children across the school has seen a significant impact on the progress that children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make. Children at Woodcroft Nursery become confident, independent learners and consequently make good and better progress in these areas of learning.
- Finally, I looked at how leaders monitor staff performance and review the impact of staff development to ensure that teaching and learning are improving. Staff at Woodcroft are extremely reflective and experienced. Leaders have ensured that continuing professional development is in line with the school's key priorities, as set out in the school development plan. Inspection evidence shows that staff are given clear targets that are reviewed regularly. Teaching staff are keen to try out new ideas and implement them in the workplace. Professional dialogue and formal meetings mean that staff regularly evaluate their teaching and the impact it has on the children's progress. As a result, children of all abilities make good and better progress in all areas of learning. By the time children start full-time education, the majority are performing at age-related expectations or beyond and are therefore well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further develop the role of teachers by ensuring that they have clear school improvement responsibilities, as detailed in the school development plan
- the school development plan is more precise in stating the impact of actions and the names of the people responsible for monitoring them.

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

Yours sincerely

Cindy Impey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, your deputy headteacher and governors. I visited all the classrooms, accompanied by you. I spoke to children and observed their behaviour during activities. A number of documents were reviewed, including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation, children's assessment and progress information, the school improvement plan and minutes of governing body meetings. I also took account of the 41 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire completed by parents and 37 text messages from parents. The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.