

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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



3 May 2017

Mrs Sara Bailey  
Headteacher  
Oaklands Nursery School  
Oaklands Avenue  
Porthill  
Newcastle  
ST5 0EX

Dear Mrs Bailey

### **Short inspection of Oaklands 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 inspection carried out since the school was judged to be outstanding in January 2013.

#### **This school continues to be outstanding.**

Oaklands Nursery continues to provide an outstanding quality of education and care for the children in the school. You have very high expectations of children and staff. You have consistently researched how children flourish and become accomplished learners. You have sought expertise so that proven, successful approaches are introduced, implemented and further developed. You and the teachers are united in establishing the clear direction and purpose of the work at Oaklands Nursery. Together, you have tenaciously built on the staff's growing confidence to embed successful practice and continue to develop. In addition, you provide significant support for a broad network of nurseries, schools and settings.

The exceptional and caring relationships that exist in the school embody the commitment you have towards placing the well-being of children and staff at the heart of your decision making. This and the high expectations you set for children's achievement symbolise the very strong ethos of the school: 'play, learn and achieve together'.

Children thrive in this exciting, vibrant and purposeful nursery. They are happy and engaged in their learning. They are confident to try new experiences and are visibly proud of their achievements. Children make outstanding progress and almost all children leave the nursery having met or exceeded the expectations for their age.

Staff support each other extremely well to plan activities and to support learning. You continue to challenge staff to improve their practice and they respond well to

this. As a member of staff commented: 'The school has done a lot for my development and the ongoing support continually improves my practice'. Consequently, there is no complacency as you and your staff strive to secure the best possible outcomes for children.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the nursery. They were queuing up at the start of the day to express their very positive views to me. Among other aspects, they spoke of how quickly their children settled and how happy children are to attend the nursery. They also reported how well the staff know all the children and their particular needs. One parent summed up the views of many with the comment: 'This is a fabulous place for the children to learn and develop. The staff are very dedicated and caring. I cannot recommend the school enough to other parents and carers.'

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection effectively. Governors visit the school more regularly when it is in session to enable them to collect more first-hand evidence of the school's work. They also provide parents and carers with more information about the impact of their work on helping the school to improve. For example, they use the school newsletters to inform parents of developments. The newly set-up social media page is used to promote upcoming events, such as the sponsored walk around Westport Lake.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You make sure that the safeguarding and welfare of children are given the highest priority. All staff are fully kept up to date with all potential dangers, including child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. When concerns about children arise, the relevant procedures are followed speedily and in detail. Leaders seek external expertise, where appropriate, to ensure that the children's needs are fully met. Such cases are kept under constant review so that actions and support are up to date, relevant and fully informed.

Parents appreciate the fact that you are regularly at the door in the morning to greet them and their children. They feel exceptionally confident of the school's ability to follow up any concerns they may have. You work very well with parents to make sure that they are aware of potential dangers, including the use of the internet. Governors are rigorous in ensuring that all the safeguarding policies and procedures are robust, through a clear programme of checks, including the vetting of new staff.

Children understand how to keep themselves safe. They know that they need to wash their hands before eating any food and after using the toilet. They are careful in their play and considerate to one another.

## Inspection findings

- You know your school very well and your drive for excellence informs priorities for improvement. All staff know your expectations and work tirelessly to achieve them. The staff constantly refine their practice through peer observations and reflection in order to drive forward the highest standards of teaching. Your plans to make further improvements are very well thought through. There is a clear and discernible sense of drive to offer the best possible provision.
- Children, including disadvantaged children, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities get off to a flying start because staff assess their individual needs accurately. This enables activities to be tailored to children's exact needs. As a result, children, most of whom start in the nursery with skills and knowledge that are lower than those typically expected for their age, make outstanding progress.
- Children are given highly stimulating experiences so that they are always motivated and continuously want to explore and find things out for themselves. For example, children were encouraged to make their own play dough from materials provided. As a consequence, they discovered the best ingredients to use through experimentation. One child delightedly exclaimed, 'Look I can make my own play dough!'
- Every opportunity is used to check children's understanding. Children were observed enjoying sorting different food types into 'good' and 'bad' piles. During this adult-led activity, adults checked children's understanding. 'Why is it unhealthy?' asked the adult. 'Because it has lots of sugar in it,' one child replied. Another child said, 'Butter makes us grow outwards not upwards'. This showed their developing understanding of the need for a healthy diet.
- Children who have special talent or abilities are swiftly identified. They are given timely support and encouragement to develop and deepen their skills, in a wide variety of subjects. Those children ready to learn phonics are encouraged to develop these skills to read and write independently, and with guided support from adults. As a result, they make rapid progress.
- Children's behaviour is exemplary. They are calm, self-assured and confident learners. During water play experimentation, a small group of children shared their ideas, took turns and helped each other to construct tubes to problem-solve how water flows. Even when children find sharing some resources difficult, adults gently intervene by encouraging children to consider for themselves how any conflict can be resolved. This supports children's personal development extremely well.
- The outdoor area, with the newly constructed mud kitchen, enriches children's play through the special nature of being outside. Forest school sessions give children the chance to test their muscles. For example, in the mud pit, a boy was engrossed using a fork to build a dam to fill with water.
- Parents are kept very well informed about each stage of their child's development and how to support their child's learning at home. Staff value parents' contributions about children's home lives, special family events and holidays, and these are celebrated in children's learning journals. You have rightly identified the

need to engage further with parents to support their children's learning at home.

- The governing body prepares its own detailed action plan against which governors evaluate the impact of their own work. Governors are fully involved in monitoring the work of the school and use their skills well to challenge and support leaders. This is contributing to the school's continuous improvement.
- Many of the staff have been at Oaklands since their initial training. Owing to leaders' consistent coaching, staff have developed into highly skilled leaders. Many staff are able to take on additional responsibilities, share expertise and help develop the skills of others. As a consequence, leaders have created a strong team who can ensure ongoing excellent practice within the nursery while supporting other nurseries, teaching schools and the development of a foundation stage cluster with local schools.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop strategies to involve parents more effectively in supporting their children's development outside school.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Nelson  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you. We visited lessons and jointly scrutinised children's work. I also met with the chair of the governing body and another governor. I talked to some parents as they brought their children to school. I considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and looked at free text comments from parents. I also considered the views of the staff who had completed the online questionnaires. I observed children's behaviour in lessons and around school. I looked at a number of documents, including: information about children's achievement; your school self-evaluation; the school development plan; attendance and behaviour records; examples of school records about the care and protection of children; and other documents relating to safeguarding.