

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Ms Michele Barrett  
Executive Headteacher  
Vanessa Nursery School  
14 Cathnor Road  
London  
W12 9JA

Dear Ms Barrett

### **Short inspection of Vanessa Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2018, 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 outstanding in December 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your unwavering pursuit of excellence forms the cornerstone of the school's success. Ably supported by your deputy headteacher, you have created a culture where staff continuously seek out and implement effective ways to maximise children's learning and well-being. Your astute investment in staff training and professional development has paid dividends. Through this, you have retained a highly motivated team of staff who have both the necessary expertise and determination to ensure that children excel and make substantial gains in their skills and knowledge. One parent, capturing the views of many, told me that 'Everything about the school is first rate.'

Leaders' and staff's passion for providing every child with a flying start to their education is palpable. From the moment children join the school, leaders and staff collaborate closely to assess and meet their needs exceptionally well. Children's behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. The school is a hive of purposeful and calm activity. Staff are extremely warm, kind and patient in their interactions with children. Their in-depth knowledge of every child ensures that they know precisely which strategies to use to encourage children to join in and feel included. You and your team are unequivocal in your work to provide excellent levels of support for the most vulnerable children, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. As a result, these children's needs are very well catered for, enabling them to play and learn successfully alongside their peers. Parents and carers are typically full of praise for the school's work. As one parent put it: 'Staff do everything they can to help my child come on leaps and bounds. I am consistently impressed by the progress my child makes.'

You and your governors have an insightful view of the school's performance, rightly acknowledging the school's many strengths. Nevertheless, leaders are unwilling to rest on their laurels. Together, you take effective and timely action to remedy relative weaknesses and maintain the outstanding quality of education. You embrace new ways of working but ensure that any changes you make focus sharply on supporting all children to reach their potential. Since the previous inspection, governors have joined together with Randolph Beresford Nursery School to form a hard federation. In becoming executive headteacher of the federation, you have given careful consideration to how best to utilise this new partnership. Wisely, you have made sure that leaders and staff across both schools work together to share expertise with the aim of raising standards even further.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and staff place paramount importance on making sure the nursery is a safe environment. At the start and end of each session, they keep a close eye on children as they arrive at and leave the building. Off-site visits are planned thoroughly so that potential risks to children's safety are assessed and minimised. Both inside and outside, adults provide children with clear and consistent expectations on how to use resources and play sensibly. For example, at the end of the day staff encouraged children to put away things they had used and move chairs carefully so that the classrooms remained safe and well-organised spaces. Crucially, staff develop children's own awareness of what they might do to keep themselves safe in different situations. For example, an adult supervising a group of children climbing in the outdoor area helped them to identify the safest way to get down. The vast majority of parents agree that their children are safe, happy and well cared for in school.

Leaders and staff are well trained and knowledgeable about their duties to safeguard the children in their care. Through strong relationships with children and families, staff are quick to detect changes in a child's circumstances or behaviour that may indicate their welfare is at risk. Should this be the case, staff report concerns promptly because they understand the necessity of securing extra help without delay. Leaders follow up on any concerns rigorously. Records show that any concerns are well managed, with leaders drawing constructively on partnerships with outside agencies to provide timely and bespoke support when children and families need it.

### **Inspection findings**

- You explained that promoting children's readiness and enthusiasm for learning underpinned all aspects of the school's work. Therefore, my first line of enquiry considered how this contributed to leaders' work to maintain the outstanding quality of education.
- The nursery is filled with children's tangible delight in learning and discovering. Children feel happy and secure and as result, cannot wait to get involved with activities as soon as they arrive through the door. They quickly hang their coats on their pegs and set off to explore the environment with their friends and adults. The foundation for this lies in you and your team's wealth of knowledge about every

child. This enables staff to plan and provide activities that fire children's imagination and spark their curiosity.

- Staff know exactly what to do to support children develop the skills and attitudes they need to form friendships and learn together well. As a result, children make substantial gains in their personal development. For example, during a group activity, the teacher's careful questioning helped children to spot that not everybody had the same amount of playdough. Children then decided that they needed to share the playdough fairly so that everyone could take part in the activity.
- Well-established daily routines and adults' expert guidance instil children with the confidence they need to try something different. Children become absorbed in their learning and are willing to persevere when they encounter challenges. In part, this is because adults encourage them to make their own decisions and find solutions when they encounter something hard. For example, a group of children decided they wanted to try to build the biggest house possible from plastic bricks. They confidently discussed and agreed the best place to put different bricks in order to achieve the goal they had set themselves.
- My second line of enquiry focused on how leaders and staff ensure that children make excellent progress over time. I particularly considered how the school's work provides the foundations for children's successful transition to full-time school.
- The school's carefully designed curriculum makes a significant contribution to children's excellent achievement, including their readiness for the Reception Year. Through the 'core' curriculum, children return to familiar activities and resources so that they practise and master key skills and knowledge, such as their understanding of number. This is skilfully balanced with experiences that stretch children's thinking. During weekly visits to woodland areas, children learn to work together and apply their skills to solve problems. Parents particularly value this aspect of the school's work and how it promotes their children's enjoyment of learning.
- Promoting children's communication skills is at the core of the school's curriculum. As a result, children make substantial progress in their language development. They quickly become articulate and expressive talkers, asking questions and sharing their ideas readily with friends, adults and visitors alike. The nursery is awash with children's lively and enthusiastic talk. Staff routinely expect children to express their ideas in full sentences and support this extremely well by modelling phrases and repeating key vocabulary. Careful attention is given to fostering children's understanding and love of language through daily exposure to nursery rhymes, songs and stories.
- The teaching of listening and attention skills is also of the highest calibre. For example, during a small-group activity the teacher expertly guided children to take turns choosing and singing nursery rhymes. Children listened intently to each other and waited patiently for their turn to join in.
- Occasionally, some staff do not maximise children's awareness of the relationship between the sounds they hear in words and the letters they can see or write. As the school's improvement plans show, leaders are taking effective action to tackle this.
- You explained that you forge strong partnerships with families and these play a

pivotal role in securing children's excellent outcomes. Therefore, my final line of enquiry explored this aspect of the school's work.

- Leaders and staff know your families exceptionally well. 'Settling-in' sessions ensure that children get off to a smooth start when they join the school. These also establish positive relationships with parents which continue throughout children's time in the Nursery classes. Effective use of the key-worker approach enables staff to build and maintain a detailed picture of each child's needs and circumstances. When families experience difficulties, leaders and staff respond in a timely and sensitive manner, with children's well-being always at the forefront of their minds. When appropriate, you and your team help families identify and access services available from outside agencies so that their children's needs can be fully understood and met.
- The vast majority of parents are lavish in their praise for the school, including its welcoming atmosphere and how they are kept well informed about their children's learning and development. Comments such as 'this is an amazing place', 'wonderful' and 'my child is so lucky to attend' reflect parents' confidence in the work of leaders and staff. Through the recent redevelopment of the school website, you are taking effective steps to strengthen the ways parents are kept up to date with the daily life of the school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff routinely extend children's understanding of the sounds they can hear in words and how these link to the letters they can see or write.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Murphy-Dutton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I held several meetings with you and your deputy headteacher to evaluate the quality of children's education, including their development and achievement over time. I reviewed a range of documentation related to safeguarding, improvement planning and assessments of children's skills and understanding. I held meetings and telephone discussions with members of the governing body. I also spoke to an adviser commissioned by the governing body to provide school improvement work. Together with leaders, I visited classrooms to observe children as they played and learned. I

spoke to children about their learning and looked at records of their achievement over time. I held a meeting with a group of staff and considered the six responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. Over the course of the inspection, I met informally with several parents to explore their views of the school. I also considered the 18 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online survey for parents), including 14 written comments.