

7 February 2018

Mrs Cottle and Mrs McHale
Co-Headteachers
Cookham Nursery School
Station Hill
Cookham
Maidenhead
Berkshire
SL6 9BT

Dear Mrs Cottle and Mrs McHale,

Short inspection of Cookham Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Indeed, since the first inspection of the school 10 years ago, Cookham Nursery School has provided an outstanding education for children. This is because all staff are passionate about ensuring that children are nurtured and supported to achieve the very best they can.

Partnerships with families are extremely strong. All staff demonstrate a fervent commitment to promote the well-being of every child. This is evident from the very positive responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. All parents who added written comments are convinced that the nursery provides the best possible experiences for their child and prepares them exceptionally well for learning when they start the Reception Year. One parent commented, 'Cookham Nursery is a wonderful enriching environment run by dedicated staff' and another, 'I think Cookham Nursery is a fantastic school which gives children the best start.'

Children's needs and interests are carefully considered and are at the heart of the planned provision. Activities flows seamlessly within the nursery. Staff take time to get to know about children's interests before they start school, by visiting families at home and getting to know each child's unique features. As a result, when children begin in the nursery, interesting and stimulating resources are set out, which captivate their imagination. Exciting opportunities for children are planned so they become absorbed in their learning and settle quickly into the nursery setting.

All staff have the highest expectations of children, who rise to the challenge. Staff are very experienced and work extremely well as a cohesive team. Adults know the children exceptionally well so they are able to nurture and encourage children to 'have a go'. When children are reluctant to take part in an activity, adults invest time with them, exploring their thoughts, so they can help them to flourish and develop the confidence to take part in all the wide and varied activities on offer.

Storytelling and role play are key features of the nursery provision. Children are encouraged to communicate their ideas, which are scribed by an adult, building a vivid picture of a child's thoughts. These stories help children to make sense of the world around them. They serve to develop children's self-esteem and self-confidence. Adults use these stories adeptly to assess children's knowledge and understanding and plan the next steps of learning for each individual child.

Since the previous inspection you have set up curriculum teams to consider the latest research in innovations in early years education. This work has been highly effective in sharing good practice across the staff team and with the other two nurseries in the federation.

Self-evaluation is accurate. Areas identified for improvement are set out in the federation improvement plan. However, actions identified are very broad and do not explicitly link to improving outcomes for different groups of pupils. Some checks on the school's work, at times, are too general to provide precise feedback about its effectiveness, thereby reducing the evidence of impact on developing the top priorities.

Safeguarding is effective

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Children know that adults who wear blue identify badge lanyards are members of staff and those wearing red lanyards are visitors to the school. This simple visual system effectively ensures that children understand about keeping safe. All adults are vigilant and check that only an authorised and correctly identified adult, as agreed by a password with parents and carers, collects a child at the end of the nursery session.

Children learn about keeping safe through conversations with adults and during their play. For example, children using the road track outside to ride on bikes and trikes know that if there is someone waiting at the zebra crossing, they need to stop, to let them cross. Visits from road safety officers and fire officers serve to enhance and develop children's understanding of keeping themselves safe in school and within the community.

Nursery staff work closely with external agencies to provide highly effective support for all families, but especially for those who have children who have additional needs. You ensure that support is sensitively and successfully coordinated to be confident that children's well-being is secured.

Inspection findings

- Children begin nursery with skills and abilities that are typical for children of their age. They make exceptionally strong progress during their time in the nursery. This includes the small proportion of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in receipt of additional funding for the early years. Children are very well prepared for learning when they move to Reception classes in school.
- Staff are exceptionally knowledgeable about the most effective strategies to implement to engage children in learning and to develop their thinking. This is because they have a very well-developed knowledge of how young children learn. Carefully crafted conversations and thoughtful questions support children extremely well to make outstanding progress in their learning.
- Your assistant headteacher is passionate about making sure that all children have the best possible experiences during their time in the nursery. She has high expectations and is a highly effective role model to staff and children alike. 'Catching children being amazing' and praising their achievements and efforts mean that their self-esteem and confidence are high, so they feel safe to take risks and explore new learning.
- Staff are highly proficient in their ability to adapt learning opportunities to match each child's needs. In one activity, an adult provided a wealth of stimulating experiences for children as they made potions in the mud kitchen. To enhance children's learning even more, they took a trip to the sensory garden to select herbs to add to the potion. Together, they ground the herbs with the pestle and mortar to extract the herbs' fragrance. Children were excited to do this and were fascinated with the resulting herbal potion.
- Governors are highly skilled, extremely knowledgeable and equally passionate about making sure the school provides the best possible start for children at this early stage of their education. Their regular visits to the school provide them with opportunities to check on the school's work and check that policies and plans are being implemented effectively. They provide effective challenge to school leaders. For example, fewer children exceeded the expectations for their age in reading and writing compared to other areas of learning. Governors ensure that the expertise within the federation is utilised effectively to ensure that even more children secure their knowledge and skills strongly in these two areas of learning.
- Children's social, literacy and numeracy skills are developed well through daily group sessions with key workers. Children cooperate with excitement and enthusiasm, when taking part in the wide variety of activities that teachers plan. In one group, children were decorating their 'telescopes' in preparation for acting out the story 'Shark in the park'. In another, children were preparing to act out the story of 'Rosie's Walk'. Highly effective use of resources, bring learning to life for children, makes a very strong contribution to their exceptional progress.
- Leaders and managers are relentless in their quest to improve outcomes for all children and to continue to find innovative ways to improve the school. Their expertise is highly regarded locally. Their support and challenge for other nursery schools and settings as part of their teaching school status is welcomed within

the wider community in Berkshire.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school improvement plan includes more explicit actions which school leaders can measure, and strategies to check the overall effectiveness in all aspects of the school's work are more precise, to ensure that excellence is sustained.

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

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you both together, your assistant headteacher, staff, children, four governors and a representative of the local authority. I visited the morning and afternoon sessions with you and observed learning inside and in the outside area. I looked at samples of children's learning journeys.

I took into consideration the staff survey results and the views of parents through the 'Parent View' questionnaire and considered the comments that parents had placed on this website. I evaluated the accuracy of your self-evaluation as well as range of other documentation. I checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements.