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Mr Andrew Feeley
Executive headteacher
The Orchards Nursery School
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Dear Mr Feeley

Short inspection of The Orchards Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 16 October 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 good in December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Children learn well and gain a valuable head start to their schooling. Children are happy and settled in each of the three classrooms. Staff are attentive to the needs of individual children. Parents and carers said that they are pleased with their children's progress at school. They emphasised the positive improvements that they see in their children's communication skills and language. Parents said that their children form strong relationships with their key person at school.

For a time following the previous inspection, the quality of education at the school slipped. Children did not achieve as much as they could. Leaders' thorough review and decisive action have ensured that The Orchards is once again giving children a good-quality education. Even so, some of the art activities that staff plan for children do not help them to demonstrate and develop their creativity.

Leaders manage change well. For example, almost all staff are new to the school since the previous inspection yet the school has continued to grow and thrive. You have successfully set up a new classroom for two-year-olds and a specially resourced provision for children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities (specially resourced provision). Staff responding to the Ofsted questionnaire said they are pleased with the ongoing improvement of the school. They enjoy working at The Orchards.

At the previous inspection, inspectors recommended that staff plan better for children's next steps, based on what they can already do. This has been achieved. Inspectors also recommended that leaders improve children's punctuality and attendance. Due to the successful work of staff and leaders, children's attendance is now good. Parents bring their children to school on time.

Leaders have a clear grasp of the main strengths of the school and the key aspects to improve further. However, they do not have a precise overview of the provision for two-year-olds.

Leaders make good links with other schools and with the local authority to help improve the school. Leaders seek opportunities for staff to develop their expertise and to share their skills with others. Links between the nursery school and the federated primary and special schools are enhancing the work of the school. Governors from the federation governing body are refining their work to develop even greater oversight of the school. However, they do not make sure that the school website gives parents enough information about the curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of care and protection for children and families is a strength of the school. Leaders determine that all safeguarding arrangements at the school are fit for purpose. They:

- have a clear knowledge of the risks to children in the local area and confirm that staff understand relevant issues
- pinpoint features of the school's successful work that meet requirements but could be even better
- keep themselves and staff fully up to date regarding national guidance and local procedures for safeguarding
- check thoroughly that staff comprehend their responsibilities
- make certain that records of safeguarding issues are of a high standard
- act quickly to gain advice from other agencies whenever concerns arise
- share detailed information with other professionals to support the assessment and review of child protection issues
- ensure that early help and advice are available to families, for example through the work of trained children and families staff at the school
- make sure that staff have proper support in managing their safeguarding work, for example through the help of a trained counsellor.

Staff teach children regularly about safeguarding, for example about how the police and the fire brigade keep families safe. In the specially resourced provision, staff take extra steps to safeguard children with complex needs. Governors double-check that leaders and staff give full and careful consideration to protecting children and their families.

Inspection findings

- Throughout the inspection I used the following lines of enquiry to determine whether the school remains good:
 - how successfully staff are supporting the learning of two-year-olds
 - whether the school provides all children with a worthwhile curriculum
 - how well staff build on what children have already achieved when planning the next steps for their learning
 - whether staff and leaders are improving children’s attendance and punctuality
 - how vigilantly leaders create a culture of safeguarding.
- Staff give a successful focus to developing the emotions and personal skills of two-year-olds. They teach children to communicate their needs to others. They give children many valuable opportunities to use books, to create pretend worlds with toys and to play and investigate. Consequently, children love talking with staff about the illustrations and words in books such as ‘We’re going on a bear hunt’. Staff arrange learning areas thoughtfully, for instance when giving children cosy, quiet spaces indoors to play calmly or rest. Staff organise the outdoor area attentively to enable children to be active and energetic. Staff speak gently and model language appropriately to children. Planned learning tasks are fun, worthwhile and full of much talk. Nevertheless, senior leaders do not have a comprehensive overview of the provision with which to identify the next steps for improving this part of the school.
- My line of enquiry in relation to the curriculum arose because I found that the school website lacks sufficient information for parents. This means that the website does not meet the requirements set out by the government’s Department for Education. Leaders and staff are clear about what they want children to learn and to achieve during their time at The Orchards. For example, they aim for children to leave nursery school with positive attitudes to learning. They want children to be confident, skilful communicators when they move to primary school Reception classes. Staff take part skilfully in children’s play. They support and extend children’s language and thinking through careful questions and comments. Most children make good progress. However, some of the art activities that staff plan limit children’s chances to be creative.
- In the specially resourced provision, the staff give sensitive attention to children’s individual needs. For instance, they are very careful to explain to children what physical touch they will be using as part of play to help the children to enjoy the feeling of a prickly rubber ball rolled across the palm of their hand.
- Leaders have worked successfully with staff to revise their approach to assessment. They have reduced the staff workload caused by too much time spent recording assessments. Staff now use assessment well to plan children’s activities.
- Leaders and staff ensure that the curriculum gives children essential chances to name, talk about and remember sounds that they hear around them. Staff teach

children many nursery rhymes to help their understanding of rhythm and rhyme. Staff assess carefully when children are ready to learn the sounds that letters make. Leaders make sure that the curriculum assists children to learn about modern Britain. For instance, staff share books that include positive images of people from minority ethnic groups and examples of print in different languages.

- Leaders have shown their ability to improve the school further. They have kept the good quality of the school while appointing new staff and expanding the provision. They have improved children's attendance and punctuality and ensured that staff make better use of assessment when planning teaching. Children achieve well. Leaders have developed The Orchards as an inclusive school that gives a high standard of care and protection for children and their families.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff plan art activities that give children better opportunities to demonstrate and develop their individual creativity
- leaders identify clear priorities for the improvement of the provision for two-year-olds
- the information on the school website explains the curriculum fully for parents and meets the requirements set out by the Department for Education.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders. You and I visited classrooms to see children's activities. I made further checks on the quality of books used with the children and considered the quality of the resources and displays. I spoke with some staff as they worked. I met with a representative of the local authority. I held a meeting with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with some parents as they arrived with their children at school. There were too few responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire to evaluate. I considered eight responses from staff to an Ofsted questionnaire. With you and the business manager, I reviewed the central record of checks on the suitability of adults at the school. With you and a member of the children and families team, I discussed your safeguarding work and considered a sample of case file records. I reviewed a further range of documents, including some staff records of assessments of children and your self-evaluation.