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14 November 2018

Mrs Nicola Daniels-Green
Headteacher
Ightenhill Nursery School
Lionel Street
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Dear Mrs Daniels-Green

Short inspection of Ightenhill Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 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 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is the third time that the school has been graded as outstanding. The whole school community should be very proud of this achievement.

You and your dedicated staff team make Ightenhill Nursery School a very happy and exciting place for children to learn and play. You are all passionate about early years education and strive to ensure that all children achieve to their very best. Every child is valued as an individual.

Under your leadership the school has continued to go from strength to strength. Complacency is not an option and you are continually looking for ways to improve. For example, planning is now more securely linked to children's interests and their progress is monitored with even greater rigour. This ensures that any children who are underperforming or racing ahead are very quickly identified. Staff have skilfully adapted the way that they group children for phonics and mathematics to ensure that they can more effectively meet children's needs. Consequently, the most able children are provided with activities that encourage them to think more deeply.

You work very well with others. For example, you lead a cluster of schools, which include local primary and nursery schools, supporting each other with the sharing of best practice, training and moderation. You also provide support to local private day nurseries to help them develop their practice in early years education.

Your staff are a close and tight-knit team. They are very proud to work at the school. You have their full support and respect. Staff told me 'It is a joy to come to work.' With your support and encouragement, some of your staff have been empowered to develop their careers in education by studying for additional qualifications. Middle leaders also appreciate the opportunities that they are being given to take a more active part in the leadership and management of the school.

The school website is bright, colourful and easy to navigate. It provides parents with a wealth of information about the early years curriculum and how their children spend their time at school.

Your school provides a calm and tranquil atmosphere for children to enjoy. Children are delightful. They skip into school with happy, smiley faces which never waiver throughout the day. Children's behaviour is excellent. Staff are positive role models. As I toured the school, I observed children who were totally engrossed in the learning. As a result, squabbles are rare.

Your local authority adviser holds you in the highest regard. She was very keen to tell me that you have 'done an amazing job in moving the school to an even higher level since the last inspection'.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve governors' knowledge and understanding of the early years curriculum so that they could be even more effective in challenging school leaders on children's progress. This issue has been resolved. Governance has improved significantly. School leaders are now held fully to account for all aspects of the school's work, including the progress that different groups of children make. The governors that I met during the inspection are ambitious for the school and have a secure understanding of the early years curriculum. They monitor all aspects of their work closely to ensure that it is effective.

Safeguarding is effective.

Keeping children safe is at the heart of the school's work. Staff understand that everyone who works at the school has a responsibility to ensure that all children are kept safe. They have a secure awareness of the indicators that a child may be at risk from harm and the procedures to follow. Staff are also very aware of the risks to child protection that apply within the local area.

Families facing difficult and challenging circumstances receive good levels of support from the school and other agencies. The procedures for recruiting new members of staff are secure, which further ensures children's safety. The school site is safe and visitors' identity is closely checked before they enter the school. A filtering system is in place to make sure that children are kept safe when online. All documentation examined during the inspection relating to safeguarding was in good order and fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- Children start at the school with knowledge and skills that are broadly below those typical for their age. From their different starting points, children, including those who are disadvantaged, make excellent progress and achieve very well. They leave the school as confident children who are well prepared for the start of their primary school education.
- Since the last inspection the number of children on roll has increased to include two-year-olds. The key-person system is highly effective and staff are very skilled in establishing close and supportive relationships with these younger children. This helps to ensure that their transition into the next classroom is seamless. Staff place very strong emphasis on developing younger children's social, language and physical skills. Conversation flows freely as children learn and play. Younger children are successfully acquiring key skills such as listening, sharing and becoming independent.
- Older children, aged three and four years, are very secure with the routines that operate within the school. They share a tight bond with their key person and are very keen to learn. Staff plan an extensive range of worthwhile activities which are fun and cover all areas of learning. Many of the resources, available for children to freely access, are natural and open-ended. This ensures that children benefit from real-life experiences and develop their imagination and creativity.
- Outdoor learning in the woodland area is a real strength of the school and makes a significant contribution to the excellent progress that children make. Children relish the opportunities they have to toast marshmallows over an open fire, build dens, rest in hammocks and swing on ropes. They have lots of fun exploring the wildlife that lives in the woods and identifying different types of trees. All these wonderful experiences help children understand the importance of respecting their environment and the creatures that live in it.
- You keep an eagle-eye on the quality of teaching to ensure that it is of the highest standard. Your staff access wide range of training opportunities to keep their teaching skills fresh and up to date. Middle leaders are beginning to take on more responsibility regarding the leadership and management of the school. This is an ongoing project which you are keen to develop further to ensure that succession planning is secure.
- You have established highly positive relationships with parents which successfully promote security and consistency in children's lives. You work effectively in partnership with them to settle new children into the school, tailoring these arrangements to meet the needs of individual children. You and your staff deliver workshops on a broad range of subjects to parents. This gives them an understanding of how their children learn, which they can develop further at home.
- Parents are effusive in their praise of the school. They told me that they are kept exceptionally well informed about their children's progress. I believe that the following comments sum up how parents feel about your school: 'This is an absolutely outstanding nursery', 'The school places great emphasis on the development of the whole child' and 'All staff are friendly and approachable – a

great team.'

- Most children who attend your school are of White British heritage. However, the proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is increasing. You take care to ensure that all children gain an appreciation of the diversity of the world in which they live. This is achieved through planned and spontaneous activities. Children learn about different faiths and cultures and there is a varied range of resources which promote equality of opportunity. You have also forged links with another local school which has a high proportion of children from different minority ethnic backgrounds. This helps children at your school gain an appreciation of similarities and differences. Children are also becoming aware of the protected characteristics, such as same-sex families and disability, in an age-appropriate and meaningful way.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to embed the role of middle leaders to ensure that they take an even greater role in the leadership and management of the 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 Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, staff, four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I also had informal discussions with parents as they brought their children to school. Together, you and I toured the school to see the teaching and learning that was taking place. I looked at examples of children's work in their individual files and in displays on the walls. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation and the development plans. I took account of the responses to the Ofsted online questionnaires completed by nine staff and eight parents. I also took account of the school's most recent questionnaire to parents.