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Mrs Deborah Willcox  
Peartree Way Nursery School  
Peartree Way  
Stevenage  
Hertfordshire  
SG2 9EA

Dear Mrs Willcox

### **Short inspection of Peartree Way Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 good in October 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Leaders and governors are determined that pupils will do well. They have established a school ethos of 'friendship, fun and learning'. The school provides a happy and vibrant learning environment where children are well cared for and are encouraged to do their very best. Children behave extremely well. They are respectful, courteous and supportive of the learning of others.

All parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, expressed positive views about the school. One parent wrote, 'My child enjoys everything Peartots Pre-School and Peartree Way Nursery have on offer, from drawing to splashing in puddles.'

Leaders and governors are determined to ensure that all staff play their role in securing further improvements for the school. Professional development for staff is effective. They value this support and it is having a positive effect in developing a skilled staff across the school. Staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire said that they feel trusted and respected. A testament to the positive ethos that exists is that everyone who responded said that they enjoy working at the school and are proud to be members of staff.

Governance is a strength of the school. The governing body is well led and governors provide challenge and support in equal measure. Governors are ambitious for the success of each child. They visit school regularly, gathering

evidence to inform their understanding of the school's strengths and the improvements that are taking place. Governors use information effectively to challenge, as well as to commend leaders on the quality of education provided.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to make teaching and children's achievement outstanding. We agreed that the quality of teaching is strengthening. However, teaching and children's achievements are not yet outstanding.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff vetting is rigorous and includes systematic checks on visitors and governors. The indoor and outdoor areas are clean and safe, with suitable measures in place to ensure appropriate supervision and the well-being of young children. Risk assessments of resources and on- and off-site activities are carried out routinely, with children's involvement wherever possible. Safeguarding and child-protection training for all staff is carried out systematically. Staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding child protection and the safety of children. They are trained to recognise signs of children who may be at risk and they pass on their concerns swiftly. Leaders ensure that vulnerable families receive strong support. All parents and staff believe that children are safe in school.

### **Inspection findings**

- In order to check that the school remains good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry. My first line of enquiry was to establish how well leaders are ensuring that the needs of all children are assessed so that the provision is adapted to enable them to achieve well.
- We saw evidence within learning journals and on the school's online assessment system that the large majority of children are making strong progress. The approach that has been chosen for planning supports children in making choices about their learning and their ability to build on their interests.
- Children's language and communication have been a focus for the school to develop, and children are well supported through a range of strategies, including use of sign language across the school and effective links to outside agencies. The school has ensured that there is a high ratio of staff to enable speaking, listening and learning opportunities to engage children's curiosity, while also modelling language, for example 'your turn, my turn'.
- Across the school, adults help the children to progress through giving commentaries and suggestions to help children to think and choose their next step. Questioning and suitable challenge within activities are lacking for the most able children to extend their thinking.
- Another line of enquiry looked at how well all leaders evaluate the school's work and plan for ongoing improvements. While senior leadership is well developed, the impact of middle leadership is still growing as middle leaders relatively new to the school become fully established. This small group of leaders are knowledgeable about their areas. They appreciate the commitment of senior

leaders to develop their roles as middle leaders. They are enthusiastic about receiving more professional development so that they can continue to support each other effectively and having opportunities to share good practice.

- Governors understand the school well. You provide them with clear information and, in turn, they challenge and probe to make sure that the school is doing as good a job as possible.
- In addition, I looked at how effectively leaders are spending the additional funding for disadvantaged children. Staff know all pupils well and are very aware of their individual barriers to learning. Additional support for disadvantaged children caters well for both their academic and their social and emotional needs.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders continue to develop their skills and expertise so that they take a lead in identifying priorities and planning effectively for improvement across the school
- the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged to deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Cassandra Williams  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

At the start of the inspection, we discussed the key lines of enquiry, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current children's learning.

Documents, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school improvement plans, were evaluated. The school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined. A discussion was held with the safeguarding leader. Together, we observed children's learning in all classes. We looked at samples of children's work in each class to evaluate the progress children are making over time. I spoke informally with children during lessons regarding their learning. I met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors.

The views of the 35 parents who responded to Parent View and the 12 staff who

completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire were taken into account. I considered 15 parental comments from the free-text service available during the inspection.