

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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14 January 2019

Ms Lisa Clarke  
Headteacher  
Comet Nursery School and Children's Centre  
20 Halcomb Street  
Hoxton  
London  
N1 5RF

Dear Ms Clarke

### **Short inspection of Comet Nursery School and Children's Centre**

Following my visit to the school on 11 December 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 February 2015.

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

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

You and your staff have continued to improve standards in the school since the previous inspection. You and your staff know the children and their families extremely well. This ensures that even the youngest children build strong relationships and settle quickly. Discussions about good practice and effective teaching are frequent. The provision is constantly adjusted to ensure that it enables the very best outcomes for all children. Staff are very positive about the school, and those who completed a survey agreed that the school is well led and managed. They appreciate the wide range of professional development opportunities offered to them. As a result, practice is highly effective across the school. You base your strategic decisions on your strong understanding of early years teaching and careful analysis of research. We agreed that your exemplary practice should continue to be shared beyond the school.

Your governors are actively involved and, as a consequence, are highly knowledgeable about the school. They have a range of skills which complement your work. Governors share your high aspirations for children. They fully support the staff's professional development and research projects to improve practice. Governors ask insightful questions to ensure that new approaches are improving the provision.

Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. Parents that I spoke with told me

that it is a safe, happy environment that welcomes its diverse community. Parents appreciate the rich and wide range of opportunities their children have. They told me that this ensures that their children 'still remember their learning at Comet', even after they have transferred to primary school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school is rigorous in its approach to safeguarding. Safeguarding records are detailed and of a high quality, and safeguarding stations in all rooms ensure that procedures are clearly understood by all staff. The necessary recruitment checks are carried out to ensure that adults working in the school are suitable.

Leaders clearly understand their roles and work effectively to ensure that any concerns are addressed correctly and in a timely manner. The premises are secure and checked regularly to ensure that they are safe. The fob system zones areas of the school, restricting access, which adds an additional layer of security.

Safeguarding training has been delivered to all staff and they are aware of the signs of potential risks. Child awareness meetings ensure that all children with additional needs are supported. Leaders regularly update all staff to ensure that policies and procedures are clearly understood.

### **Inspection findings**

- For my first line of enquiry, I explored how effectively you and your leaders have engaged parents in the curriculum. I looked at how parents contribute the family voice to children's learning stories and special books. I chose this line of enquiry because it was identified as an area of improvement in the previous inspection.
- You and your leaders are truly committed to involving parents in all aspects of their child's learning. You have provided parents with clear information about how to contribute to their child's learning stories and special books. Parents I spoke with told me that they appreciate that books are always available to take home. This means that they can become involved in their child's learning when it is convenient for them. The weekly Wednesday focus on special books also provides a clear routine to further aid parental engagement. You and your leaders use creative approaches to ensure that the views of all parents are added to children's books.
- The books that I looked at contained a wide range of evidence of learning across the curriculum. You have developed a clear approach to gathering information, which holds the child at the centre of learning. This style is now being mirrored by family members and is valued by the children. As a result, special books and learning stories provide a rich source of evidence of children's learning. They show development across the curriculum, both at home and at school.
- For the second line of enquiry, I evaluated to what extent your focus on physical literacy has improved children's progress. I chose this line of enquiry because it is a priority in your school improvement plan this year.
- You and your leaders are committed to improving strength and physical activity

as an avenue to enable good fine motor skills later. The outdoor learning environment is vibrant and offers opportunities to physically challenge the children. You and your leaders recognise that it can offer something different for children to inside learning. You continue to adapt the environment to ensure that it provides a breadth of opportunities for children to run and ride at speed, dig and climb.

- I observed children outside challenging themselves independently in a variety of ways. Adults helped some to develop their confidence in riding balance bicycles, while others rode safely at speed. Practitioners spotted that further challenge was required for some and added ramps and beams. I observed one child failing a number of times, but he persevered because of the encouragement from staff. He was delighted when he managed to ride across the bridge. Other aspects of the provision are highly effective at developing core strength, for example the oversized utensils in the sandpit and the tyre rope swing, which requires children to use their full body strength.
- The promotion and development of vocabulary are interwoven into activities. Practitioners are skilled at highlighting key vocabulary in their interactions with children. I observed a two-year-old child learning new vocabulary to match his journey through a challenging path of tyres and beams. Children's personal, social and emotional skills are strong. Even the youngest children know how to use equipment safely, cooperate well and share. One child, who was very keen to have a turn on a bicycle, sat on the bench and said, 'I'll sit here and wait.' As a result, pupils are making strong and sustained progress in their physical development, as well as developing confidence to take risks and explore their capabilities.
- For the final line of enquiry, I explored the effectiveness of the school's approach to supporting children eligible for the pupil premium through your Natural Explorers initiative. I chose this because it is a priority in the school improvement plan.
- You and your leaders focus consistently on ensuring that children eligible for the pupil premium achieve the very best outcomes. Through this approach, you have provided children with wide, rich and purposeful learning experiences which support the development of speech and language. You and your leaders are committed to engaging families by encouraging them to attend activities and visits. Parents I spoke to told me that this has given them the confidence to take their child on similar visits.
- Children gain real excitement from their weekly experiences out in the community, for example eating biscuits in the museum, meeting a cat in the park and having lunch in a restaurant. Small groups and a high number of adults ensure that children are immersed in language throughout the experience. Travelling on public transport is used as part of the learning experience.
- You have made effective use of the pupil voice to reflect your approach and ensure that future experiences continue to meet children's needs. For example, children have said that they like returning to places and you have acted on this. You have identified that there is a need to further include the views of parents so

that you can be even more effective at addressing any gaps in children's knowledge and understanding.

- As a result of your work, children eligible for pupil premium funding make substantial and sustained progress. The vast majority who start school with skills broadly below those typical for their age catch up well. They leave the school with skills that are at or above those seen typically for their age. Your actions are also ensuring particularly strong progress in the development of communication, language and literacy. This also helps children in building their confidence and independence. This prepares children very well for life beyond the school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to work closely with parents to understand the changing needs of children eligible for the pupil premium so that any gaps in knowledge and understanding can be addressed
- the exemplary practice continues to be shared beyond 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 Hackney. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen Morrison  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the school business manager. I met with the chair of the governing body, another school governor and the local authority school improvement adviser. I also spoke to parents informally during the school day.

I visited all classrooms with senior leaders, spoke to children and looked at the activities in the classrooms and outdoor area. I viewed 18 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and read the 18 free texts from parents. I also viewed six responses to the staff questionnaire.

I scrutinised a range of documents, including those relating to self-evaluation and planning, the school's assessment information, safeguarding policies and procedures, and minutes from the governing body meetings.