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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Angela Stanton
Headteacher
Alfreton Nursery School
Grange Street
Alfreton
Derbyshire
DE55 7JA

Dear Mrs Stanton

Short inspection of Alfreton Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 26 February 2019, 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 March 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 lead the school by example and with unwavering determination and commitment. Your leadership is highly effective. You are relentless in your pursuit of high-quality teaching and support for all children and you leave no room for complacency. Staff throughout the school continue to be forward thinking. Children get an excellent start to their education and make substantial progress.

You value the contribution that your able team of staff make. All staff are reflective practitioners, full of enthusiasm and highly motivated. Staff morale is high. They are supportive of each other and work with a common purpose. Staff continuously look to improve their own practice and offer the children new learning opportunities. All staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey agreed strongly that they are proud to be members of this small learning community.

The school is bright, stimulating and full of rich resources. You and the staff provide the children with interesting activities. There is a buzz of excitement as children enjoy their daily play and focused learning sessions. You ensure that children begin to develop strong social skills and moral understanding. Children benefit from a calm and well-structured breakfast and lunchtime provision. They are respectful and play well together. They take turns and share the resources on offer to them. Their behaviour is exemplary. The conduct of these very young children, during the inspection, was of the highest standard.

Your time in post has enabled you to develop a very incisive understanding of the school and the community it serves. You have an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's performance. The school's improvement plans are clear in setting out what needs to develop further. They do not, however, identify measurable success criteria. Leaders and governors, therefore, do not measure the impact of different actions taken to improve children's progress as well as they might.

You have many lead practitioners working in the school. Expertise is shared both within and beyond the school. You have used this expertise to great effect to develop and maintain the strengths of the school that were identified at the previous inspection. Staff, like you, take a strategic approach to developing and improving the quality of teaching in their respective subject areas.

You have adopted a new assessment system for checking on and recording children's progress and attainment. After some modification, you are much more satisfied that it provides the level of detail that you need. Adults use this system with confidence to identify any gaps in children's learning and then promptly fill them.

You are very well supported by members of the governing body. Governors are a committed group of individuals. They are knowledgeable. They know the school well and are effective in their roles. Governors have increased their understanding of children's assessment information. They now have a better understanding of how well the children are achieving. Governors are fully aware of the children's progress and attainment targets. These targets, however, are not linked precisely enough to leaders' actions in the school's improvement plans. The school's improvement plans, therefore, are less effective than they might be in supporting developments in the school.

Parents and carers are highly supportive of the work of the school. One parent explained that, 'The teachers are fantastic. Not only do they provide a healthy learning environment, they invite parents to ask questions and they offer reassurance.' Another stated, 'I am not sure if the staff truly know how much of a positive impact they have.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is at the heart of the school's work and all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are caring, compassionate and know all the children in this small school community well. They are vigilant in looking for any signs that a child's safety or welfare might be at risk.

Leaders have carried out all the necessary checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. There is an experienced and knowledgeable team of safeguarding staff. They keep themselves, and other staff, well informed about, and trained in, safeguarding matters.

You have fostered strong relationships with parents and outside agencies. You are diligent in following up any referrals that you make. Children are, therefore, helped to stay safe, and their families are well supported. Record-keeping is comprehensive and tracks the impact of actions taken. All parents who responded to Parent View, and those spoken with during the inspection, agreed that their children were safe and cared for well. One spoke for many when they made a point of saying how, 'All staff go above and beyond for the children.'

Inspection findings

- Teaching continues to be of a consistently high quality. All adults provide strong role models for the children. They base their teaching approaches on the most effective practice. Adults provide children with positive and engaging learning experiences. For example, leaders have refined the ways in which they develop children's understanding of technology. A project-based approach and the involvement of local businesses have been particularly effective in arousing children's interests. This is especially true for the boys.
- Adults listen and pay close attention to the children. They attend to their needs, and they use questioning well to prompt their thinking and to correct their understanding. Adults routinely use dialogue well to engage children in communication, and to develop their language skills. High-quality equipment and resources add to children's learning experiences, both indoors and outside. Adults make intelligent use of the facilities to stimulate children's imagination, to help them to take risks, and to encourage them to try out their ideas. Children show resilience and an ability to concentrate for sustained periods of time, thinking carefully about what they are doing.
- Children continue to achieve well during their time in the school. Most children enter the school with skills below those typical for their age. They make substantial progress and leave the school with skills that are at least typical of those in their age group. Teachers provide the most able children with a high level of challenge. During the inspection, the most able children were learning about deforestation. Scientific terminology was used well to help children learn how plants use carbon dioxide and make oxygen.
- Adults provide disadvantaged children and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with extra support and care. Speech and language skills are a barrier for some children who enter the school. New teaching programmes used to help children overcome any barriers are successful in improving their communication skills.
- Following the school's previous inspection, leaders were asked to encourage parents to contribute to their children's learning journals. Leaders have purchased an electronic system to support this. They provide all parents with direct access to their children's learning record. School staff and parents add examples of what the children have been doing. This two-way communication provides a smooth transition between school and home learning. Parents explained how much they love the chats they have with their children about the

skills they are learning.

- Some two-year-old children are now eligible to join the school. Children's well-being is at the heart of the school. Leaders work very closely with parents to build trusting relationships. This supports these very young children to settle quickly and smoothly into the school. Adults gain an accurate understanding of the children's development stage and specific needs on entry. They make sure that the children can access the curriculum, feel comfortable and be safe.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- refine the school's improvement plans, making them detailed enough to measure the impact of their actions, so that governors can hold leaders to account for improving children's achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Vondra Mays
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I discussed leaders' self-evaluation of the school, and I shared my key lines of enquiry. I held meetings with you, several staff, and members of the governing body. I observed children's learning jointly with you. I observed children's behaviour around the school. I spoke with children informally, examined samples of their work and reviewed children's electronic learning journals.

In addition, I considered a range of documents. These included the school's improvement plans and records relating to children's progress and attainment. I considered the parents' responses to Parent View, as well as their free-text responses. The staff survey responses were also taken into consideration. I reviewed the school's safeguarding practices. The school's website was also checked to confirm whether it meets the requirements on the publication of specified information.