

26 March 2019

Mrs Natalie Parkinson
Headteacher
Horden Nursery School
Horden
Peterlee
County Durham
SR8 4TB

Dear Mrs Parkinson

Short inspection of Horden Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 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.

You, with the support of the assistant headteacher and your governors, have maintained the high quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have provided strong leadership and support to staff to achieve the best you can provide for your school's children. Excellent levels of supervision, well-managed resources, cheerful, lively classrooms and highly effective teaching enable all to achieve and experience feelings of success. Consequently, children are exceptionally well prepared for their move on to their Reception class.

Since the last inspection in 2015, you have addressed the recommendation to work with other schools, sharing your excellent practice. This is now well established, with staff routinely sharing their ideas and expertise in the curriculum. Your outstanding curriculum ensures that the children will learn through highly engaging activities. Throughout the day, children were fully absorbed by the wide range of exciting experiences. They were fascinated when they magically heard their voice repeated from the sound box. They were enthused and excited by the arrival of ready-to-hatch eggs and the possibility of new chicks that day. They patiently, though happily, wrapped in coats and gloves, waited to toast their marshmallows on the open fire.

The high level of interest that the curriculum provides, along with the excellent teaching provided by staff, promotes outstanding behaviour. Children play and interact extremely well and are caring towards one another. No unwanted behaviour was seen during my visit. Records and conversations with parents show that this is

normally the case. Children follow the very clear school routines and the staff's gently given instructions about how they should behave. One parent summed this up perfectly by saying that the school was 'a happy place where [her] child made new friends'.

Parents say they are very happy with the school and feel well informed about school life. They like the newsletters, they like that staff are very approachable and that nothing is too much bother because you have time to listen. Many parents felt that you go above and beyond. Relationships are warm; all parents say that they are made to feel very welcome. Your work with families and attention to the well-being and welfare of children are striking and key strengths for your school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding remains a strength. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. In fact, the arrangements for keeping children safe are excellent.

Your systematic and well-organised approach to statutory requirements and record-keeping means that all checks on staff are completed and paperwork is in order. Furthermore, the culture in the school ensures that all are fully aware of their duty of care. When staff have needed to act on a concern they have done so swiftly and appropriately. Similarly, routines for managing medicine, first-aid treatment, fire-safety, site security and cleanliness operate with well-practised efficiency.

Staff keep a very caring watch over each child. Staff know what to do if they see any signs that a child might be experiencing difficulties. Staff receive regular training about a wide range of safeguarding matters, most recently concerning the 'Prevent' duty. There is a strong emphasis placed on promoting respectful and tolerant attitudes towards different religions and cultures. Inside and outdoor areas are well organised to ensure that children can move about freely and safely explore. Leaders and governors make regular checks to make sure that this remains the case.

Inspection findings

- This is an excellent school. Adults act as inspirational role models and keep children engaged with many stimulating activities to choose from. Children can use equipment with confidence and engage purposefully during independent activities.
- Children make very fast progress in all areas of their learning from starting points that are much lower than typical for their age. Children respond well to the exciting experiences and the high-quality teaching in the school provision. As a result, by the end of their time in school, most children reach the standards that are typical for their age and those children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities progress extremely well from their low starting points. You are very successful at ensuring that all the different groups of children that you cater for achieve equally well.

- Plans to use additional funding to help disadvantaged children achieve better are very successful. You have ensured that children with delay in their speaking have high-quality intervention to accelerate their progress. Consequently, they forge ahead at impressive rates.
- You have identified the children's particularly low starting points in literacy. You have successfully focused on improving their literacy skills, which has led to them making rapid progress in this subject. Staff develop children's literacy by providing lots of interesting opportunities in classrooms and outdoors. Children enjoy picking up books and listening to exciting stories. Strong teaching of reading and phonics encourages children to develop their skills in forming letters and write independently.
- Children have many opportunities to practise counting and understanding number. Although your children are progressing well in mathematics, you are planning to increase staff knowledge on mathematical activities to get even more enjoyment of number. You are particularly interested in helping children experience patterns to increase their understanding of number.
- Governors regularly review the work of the school. Their regular visits around the school provide their views on whether the curriculum is engaging children in interesting learning experiences. This ensures that the quality of experiences for the children remains at a high standard.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance provide:

- training for staff to further develop their knowledge and understanding of mathematics to provide new imaginative, purposeful tasks that engage children, particularly through exploring patterns.

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

Yours sincerely

Ann Muxworthy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, and spoke to a range of staff at the school. I talked to children when they were playing and learning. I met with three governors and spoke to a representative from the local authority. I conducted a learning walk with you during the day. I looked at learning journeys and records of children's progress and attainment. I scrutinised

the school's self-evaluation and development plan, the early years pupil premium plan, information about the school's performance, and safeguarding and child protection information. I met with seven parents and four staff and considered the four responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, and the Ofsted questionnaire for staff.