

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 May 2019

Miss Ruth Williamson
Headteacher
Hetton-le-Hole Nursery School
Victoria Street
Hetton-le-Hole
Houghton le Spring
Tyne and Wear
DH5 9DG

Dear Miss Williamson

Short inspection of Hetton-le-Hole Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 good in April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since the last inspection, you have continued to review and improve all aspects of the nursery. You efficiently evaluate how effectively the nursery is operating through a thorough process. You take positive steps to involve staff, governors, parents, carers and children in this. For example, by asking parents to answer a monthly question, you capture their views on such things as how well they feel you communicate with them. You pinpoint the correct priorities for development and have high-quality detailed action plans to identify accurately how to achieve better outcomes for pupils. Your vision for the school is shared with all members of the school community, including governors and staff. Staff feel highly valued and are proud to be part of the school.

The governing body is extremely strong and effective in its role. Governors have in-depth knowledge of the nursery. They prudently challenge and support you to continually improve. They begin their challenge to you with a vigorous analysis of how well the children are progressing. They regularly visit the nursery to look at what is happening and identify any areas where they see aspects which are

particularly successful and others which can be improved.

You have successfully enhanced the learning environment, with a particular emphasis on improving boys' engagement in learning, using approaches in line with the eco-philosophy of the nursery. This has included such projects as developing an allotment to enrich children's understanding of the world, and recycling wooden pallets to create equipment to boost physical development and imaginative play.

All teaching and learning interactions we observed together during the inspection were extremely strong. From modelling language to scaffolding learning, staff clearly demonstrated that they were completely aware of the different needs of each child in their care. This meant that teaching was focused on the individual and the next steps in their learning. The stimulating environment means that children are consistently absorbed in their learning. For example, when role playing in the well-equipped 'hospital' area, children took on the different roles of doctor, nurse and administrator. Staff knew exactly when to observe, join in or move the play forward. The children's conversation demonstrated the excellent use and understanding of advanced technical language, such as stethoscope and temperature.

This strong promotion of language was typical of the high aspirations for the children shown by all staff. Staff extend children's understanding by asking them to describe the scent, shape and colour when painting detailed flower pictures. Staff are never complacent with children. For example, children were asked why they were going to use paintbrushes in their 'archaeological' dig to find a given number of dinosaur bones. Staff did not accept just 'to be careful', but again asked why they needed to be careful – this successfully developed children's language and deepened their critical thinking skills, demonstrated by the children's response, 'Because old bones are brittle and precious.'

The high-quality learning environment supports children's independent learning effectively. For example, we saw children using information technology to create their own versions of cubist paintings. Others were practising the movements learned during the 'Dough Disco' earlier, skills needed to develop their writing.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They are polite and courteous. Parents comment very positively about the calm, caring and happy atmosphere you and the staff have created. Children work exceptionally well together, willingly accepting each other's help. We observed in a mathematics session how one child supported another, suggesting checking whether the answer was correct first. Children are consistently engaged in and focused on learning because of the exciting and stimulating activities. We saw this when children took part in the fossil hunt in the outdoor sandpit, where they identified and measured different bones on a skeleton while being 'palaeontologists', as one child told me. Children are taught effectively to take risks. For example, when children were playing on the rope swing, staff discussed with them how to act safely, ensuring that no one is in the way, and how to grip the rope correctly. Children were then encouraged to set their own risk of how high to swing. They also understand the importance of personal hygiene and health, such

as washing hands before eating their snack.

Records of observations, assessments and the children's work show that most children enter the nursery with skills and knowledge a little below those typical for children of their age. They make rapid progress in their time at the nursery and leave at least in line if not above where they are expected to be for their age. This is an improving picture and means that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Governors regularly monitor these arrangements and ask specialists from outside the nursery to complete an external review annually. You make sure that staff and governors keep their training and knowledge up to date.

Staff risk assess the environment every day to make sure that it is safe for the children. They are constantly aware of where children are and maintain staffing levels in all areas so that children are always supervised.

Inspection findings

- Since the last inspection, you have focused effectively on developing children's language and literacy and extending vocabulary. This has significantly improved children's speaking. Children use and understand technical language in their work. For example, when writing individual letters, they speak of graphemes. Staff record the development of children's spoken language in detail in their learning journals, which clearly demonstrate progress from using single-word responses on first arrival in the nursery, to asking and answering questions in full sentences before they leave to move on to primary school.
- The teaching of phonics is extremely strong. We observed an adult-led activity which introduced the initial sound of 'p'. Children were totally engaged in the birthday party, with presents unwrapped, all beginning with that sound. Candles on the pink cake were blown out by the children using a breathy 'p'. Children then wrote the letter shape (grapheme) on a birthday card, with those higher-ability children encouraged to write a message in the card during independent learning.
- We saw a similar standard in a mathematics session, where children developed their mastery of mathematics by using a variety of practical equipment to count to 12 in several different ways, from using bones to identifying the numeral on a number line. The teacher extended understanding through additional questioning as to who had the larger number and who had the smaller.
- The observations of teaching and learning you undertake are of a high quality and focus on improving outcomes for children, with aspects of effective learning uppermost in mind. You always celebrate staff strengths, but more significantly, you identify any small improvements that can be made to their already strong teaching. Your effective partnership working with other settings which are

already outstanding has enabled staff to benefit from this input, either from training or visits. Staff talk of how this has impacted positively on their practice, and that their confidence in teaching some subjects such as mathematics has improved. However, their role as leaders of the curriculum needs further development to be more effective.

- You see to it that in practice staff make sure that children are comfortable when performing acts of personal hygiene. They talk to children about privacy and consent. Staff know the signs to look for should they be concerned that a child may be exploited. You make sure that staff have a good working knowledge of when to refer children to other services for their protection.
- The records you keep for vulnerable children are of a high quality. You make certain that the voices of the child and parent are recorded. All children's emotional well-being is of a high concern for you. You ensure that additional emotional support is always available for these children through access to the nurture group. Staff talk with these children daily to make sure that they are feeling safe and secure and respond appropriately if they are not.
- You have very strong relationships with the parent body. There were no negatives in any responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Those parents I spoke with could not identify a single aspect you could improve upon. From advice and guidance daily, to the support you give parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who are navigating the system, all parents are confident that you and your staff are always there for them.
- You have many means of successfully communicating with parents. Highly informative displays in the public areas of the building give excellent tips as to how parents can support their children. Parents use these ideas to help support their children's learning at home. They know the next steps in their child's learning, and how they can help their children to take these, because of the focused meetings they have with staff and the clear records of progress made available to them.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the role of middle managers is enhanced to further enable them to develop responsibility and accountability for the wider aspects of 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 Sunderland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Dorrity
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The focus of the inspection was to affirm the standards identified at the previous section 5 inspection and to find out how well children and the nursery were progressing. I held a variety of meetings with you and observed several sessions jointly with you in the nursery. I considered a range of evidence, including the school improvement plan and leaders' self-evaluation. I also reviewed other documentation, such as records and evidence of children's progress.

I met with four members of the governing body, spoke with a representative of Together for Children (on behalf of the local authority) and met your school improvement partner. I considered the 14 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and I spoke with six parents. I reviewed the eight responses to the staff questionnaire and spoke with four staff.

At Hetton-le-Hole Nursery School, you have a separately registered early years provision for zero- to three-year-olds, which did not form part of this inspection. You also provide a before- and after-school club for children who attend the nursery.