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Ms Glenda King
Headteacher
Ethelred Nursery School and Children's Centre
1 Gundulf Street
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Dear Ms King

Short inspection of Ethelred Nursery School and Children's Centre

Following my visit to the school on 30 April 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

Your school has recently had a period of significant change. You have become part of a federation and you have moved to new premises in the same academic year. This has not been without challenges. However, you and your senior leaders have navigated the changes seamlessly. The quality of education and your child-centred ethos remain strengths of the school. The learning outcomes for children continue to be exemplary. Staff, parents and carers agree that they have seen no change to the quality of the outstanding provision.

As part of the move to the federation, the governing body has amalgamated and expanded. Governors know the school well. They are well trained, committed and enthusiastic. They are keen to share processes, skills and expertise and have begun to do this effectively. They fully support and respect leaders' skills and experience in realising your vision to develop and sustain the school's effectiveness. You acknowledge the need to strengthen the work within the new federation to share expertise and raise standards still further.

In spite of your recent move, your school remains at the heart of the community. You continue to serve generations of families. Staff are happy here and feel very proud of their school. As you remarked, 'No one ever wants to leave!' This culture of always wanting to learn more and do your best for every child underpins all that you do. Leaders continually seek new initiatives to enhance the learning opportunities for the children. An example of this is the recent interactive music

training programme. While aimed at children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), it is beneficial to all and is clearly having an impact on all children.

The provision for two-year-old children continues to be strong. Staff are well trained to meet the needs of these children. With the move to the new premises, there is now room to improve this provision even further.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their feedback. They typically describe Ethelred as fantastic; a place that is warm and caring. They describe you as calm and personable. Parents praise the multicultural staff who really get to know their children. They say staff know exactly what to do to help settle their children and to work with and listen to parents. Parents commend the wealth of activities available to their children and say these are 'amazing'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that the culture of safeguarding and keeping children safe is of the utmost importance at Ethelred. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff have received up-to-date training. They can articulate the impact that this has had on their vigilance in ensuring that children are kept safe from harm.

This strong safeguarding ethos feeds into daily life at the school both inside and outside. Children show that they feel safe in the confident way that they approach their learning and participate enthusiastically in activities. There are clear supervision ratios and close monitoring and knowledge of where children are at all times. Adults take every opportunity to help children learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, they ensure that children who need it are supported to eat safely using a knife.

Adults observe when children are playing alone and use timely interventions to draw them back to peers or engage them in a conversation to extend their learning. Close adult supervision is personalised to manage appropriate risk. This was seen when children were practising jumping from the climbing frame. Varying degrees of support and encouragement were offered to meet children's needs.

Staff know how to use the well-organised systems to report any concerns. The safeguarding culture is firmly embedded and the sharing and reporting of concerns while working to support families is paramount.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed two key lines of enquiry. The first looked at how well leaders check the progress of groups of children, including the most able. This was an area for improvement at the previous inspection.
- The school responded to this immediately and has worked hard to ensure that the progress of all groups, including the most able, is tracked and monitored

continually. Evidence in the children's learning journals, effective planning and children's learning on classroom displays shows how well leaders meet the needs and check the progress of all groups of children.

- The school has recently compiled a list of the most able children. They have noted their areas of strength and have introduced a variety of learning activities which promote STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) to add challenge to their learning experiences. These are accessible to all children. Story group sessions have been introduced to target and support the most able children more effectively. These are having a very positive impact on children's early reading skills.
- This focus on different groups is having a strong impact on children's outcomes. These were highlighted by the recent local authority report which noted that 88% of all children made strong progress in summer 2018. This was 20% more than in 2017. The difference between the achievement of boys and the achievement of girls has also narrowed over time.
- Information gathered by leaders about current children's achievement is positive. This includes the progress for all groups, including disadvantaged children, children in the early stages of learning English, children with SEND, and the most able. The school uses external support from other professionals well to support children with significant needs. This ensures that their needs are met swiftly.
- We also agreed to focus on how well leaders at all levels maintain the outstanding quality of education over time. We gathered evidence to ensure that the recent partnership with the federation and the move to new premises had not had a negative impact on the outstanding quality of education.
- Parents praise their children's experiences. They say that children are very happy due to the tailored curriculum and specific, targeted interventions. Respectful relationships across all levels are exceptional and there is a genuine warmth in this school. Staff are happy and the majority have worked at the school for a long time. They are committed to the school and are well trained early years specialists.
- There is consistency in terms of high expectations across the school. Everyone shares these, which is evident in daily practice and the quality of teaching and learning. Planning is effective for all groups of children. It identifies their needs and focuses well on children's next steps. Outcomes are very high as a result.
- The school has increased enrichment opportunities available to children. Practitioners focus on creative problem-solving and open-ended conversations using phrases such as, 'What else can you do?' and 'Can you try this...?' during investigative activities. These are specifically aimed at the able mathematicians but all children can participate, and they do. Learning beyond the classroom is a focus and children spend time exploring their natural environment as well as taking full advantage of what London has to offer.
- Children are listened to and make excellent progress from their starting points, particularly in their social and emotional development. They have the confidence to try something new and have a can-do attitude. Children are able to transfer skills that adults have shown them, such as dressing into warmer clothes.

Children do not give up; they show persistence and then independently manage challenging self-care expectations. This was evident when children were buttoning up their coats to go outside.

- Governors are skilled, committed and enthusiastic. They are aware of what the school does well and the things needed to make it even better. Leaders are not complacent. The culture of 'being the best you can be' extends across all levels of leaders, governors and staff. Staff continue to seek out new opportunities to extend learning outcomes and enhance the learning experience.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- further embed links with the newly formed federation of schools to strengthen the quality of provision still further
- further extend the provision for two-year-olds now that the school is in a position to do so with its new facilities and premises.

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

Yours sincerely

Paula Craigie
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, your acting executive headteacher and your deputy headteacher who leads on special educational needs. I met with the vice chair of governors and four governors. I also met with a representative of the local authority. I spoke briefly with parents as they dropped off their children in the morning and I took account of the responses to the Ofsted questionnaire completed by 60 parents. I spoke informally with all staff and some children and analysed the 19 staff survey responses to the Ofsted questionnaire. Together, we observed learning both indoors and outside and watched small-group teaching activities. I looked at samples of children's learning journals. I also reviewed a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the single central record of staff suitability checks and other documentation related to safeguarding.