

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Miss Anne Humble  
Co-Headteacher  
Newburn Manor Nursery School  
Townfield Gardens  
Newburn  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
Tyne and Wear  
NE15 8PY

Dear Miss Humble

### **Short inspection of Newcastle Nursery School Federation – Newburn Manor Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 outstanding in November 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of outstanding as a result of this inspection.**

Since the previous inspection, there have been considerable changes to the school's governance and staff. The school has federated with two local nursery schools. During the inspection, the headteacher and lead teacher were absent. As co-headteacher of the federation, you and members of your team are supporting the school. The federation has also resulted in the reorganisation of the governing body.

The school continues to be a happy and nurturing place where children are kept safe and enjoy warm relationships with adults. The school has many strengths. Staff know the children well and plan interesting activities to spark their interest, such as planning and making bags to carry sandwiches to a picnic. Children use the recently developed outdoor area to extend their understanding of the world by growing vegetables in the allotment and making pretend food in the mud kitchen. Staff work successfully as a team and spend much time talking and playing with the children. Staff and leaders make the nursery calm. Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel supported in their role and value the opportunities they have to attend training.

You have identified areas for improvement in both teaching and assessment. You and your team have been helping staff to develop the way that assessment information is gained, so that it shows what children can do independently and in a range of contexts. This change in focus is starting to become evident in the children's learning journals. Staff are also being supported to make more use of the observations they make to plan next steps for children. Teaching is being developed so that the learning environment is continually refined to meet the needs of all learners, including opportunities for challenge. However, changes that leaders are making are in their early stages. Leaders have not yet made all of the checks and improvements that have been planned and it is too soon to determine their impact on children's outcomes.

Governors are passionate about their role and are committed to supporting the work of the school and the staff team. There are plans to recruit new governors as numbers have fallen since the federated governing body was introduced. Governors attend a range of safeguarding training to develop their skills. They make regular visits to the school, write reports about what they have found and share these with the wider governing body. However, governors do not have a clear view of the strengths and areas for development of the school and have not effectively monitored the actions on the school development plan.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school staff and appreciate the approachable and inclusive atmosphere that the school provides. Those I spoke with and those who completed the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and submitted free-text responses were effusive about the help that the school provides for families. They particularly appreciate the way that children are helped to settle into school and to quickly become confident learners. Several parents said that their child's communication and language had improved markedly due to work done in school and through links made with outside agencies.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to give children more opportunities to reflect on previous experiences and learning in nursery. This has been resolved fully and is now a strength of the school. Staff frequently work with children to produce books about visits to the farm, Comic Relief and the first day at school. The books also include what the children have told their parents about the events. Children are able to look at these books, talk about the photographs and recount the experiences that took place. An area has been developed where children can leave models, return to develop them further and talk to adults or other children about the process of making them. Children also have access to their learning journals and can talk about and reflect on what they have learned during their time at nursery.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and well maintained. Leaders keep themselves fully up to date about national and local child protection matters. They give staff regular safeguarding information and training. Staff have a good

understanding of how to spot safeguarding issues and how to report their concerns. Relationships between staff and children are positive, calm and supportive. Leaders keep precise and comprehensive records of the school's safeguarding work. They link fully with other agencies to protect children and families. Staff plan opportunities carefully to teach children how to keep themselves safe. Statutory welfare requirements are met.

## **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, I considered how well leaders evaluate the quality of provision and use this to plan for improvements. In the absence of the headteacher and lead teacher, you have identified areas for improvement based on observations of teaching, scrutiny of assessment systems and children's outcomes. These include the development of reading, writing and understanding the world. Opportunities for children to extend their understanding of the world are clearly visible. The outdoor area, in particular, enables children to learn about caring for plants, to explore natural materials by using the mud kitchen and to find out about the wider world through the attractive 'garden centre' role-play area. Children are developing their reading skills through having access to several 'book nooks' outdoors where they can share and enjoy a range of books with their friends. However, the opportunities for children to practise their skills in writing are not as well planned for.
- I also considered how well teaching is stimulating and engaging all children, including the most able. Staff work well with children at group time and plan interesting activities to extend their skills in mathematics, early reading and writing. They also promote positive behaviour and help children to develop their personal and social skills through the effective use of familiar soft toys. However, opportunities for children to apply their skills during free-choice time in the indoor and outdoor learning environments are not as well planned for. This means that children, including the most able, are not being sufficiently challenged to extend their knowledge and make the best possible progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Staff carry out a wide range of assessments and track the progress of both groups and individual children. Assessments have been recently developed so that they include more information about what children can do independently and show staff if skills have been embedded. These improvements are still at an early stage and do not yet include the next steps for children and how these can be used to offer challenge and develop children's learning further.
- The school has a small number of children who are eligible for the early years pupil premium. The funding has been well spent on developing reading, writing and personal and social skills of the children, as well as their understanding of the world. The impact of the funding means that the majority of these children are on track to leave the school with skills appropriate for their age in the identified areas of learning and development. The funding for disadvantaged children is monitored and evaluated and leaders plan to develop this scrutiny even further.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors receive training and support so that they are clear about the priorities of the school and can effectively monitor the development of them
- assessments are used to make sure that the next steps for children are developed and planned for
- staff develop the indoor and outdoor learning environments so that children, including the most able, have the opportunity to apply their skills, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Hussey  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I spoke with parents at the start of the school day, talked to a parent on the telephone and met another parent later in the day. I held meetings with you and with school leaders. We reviewed the plans for improvement, information on current children's progress and leaders' evaluation of the school's performance. We observed children's learning together. I also met with members of the governing body and spoke to the chair on the telephone. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I scrutinised various safeguarding records, including the checks on adults working in the school. I reviewed a number of records of children's learning. I met with members of the staff team. I also considered 13 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 11 free-text responses.