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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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29 July 2019

Mrs Jan Bennett
Headteacher
Effra Nursery School and Early Years Centre
35 Effra Parade
Brixton
London
SW2 1PL

Dear Mrs Bennett

Short inspection of Effra Nursery School and Early Years Centre

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 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 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.

You have been uncompromising in your desire to improve outcomes for the children and families who attend Effra Nursery. The continued pursuit of excellence by leaders is evident in the strong outcomes and progress children make, which have been sustained over time. In October 2018, the school joined The Lambeth Federation of Nursery Schools. The governing body has a clear vision for the nursery to continue to be an inclusive provision at the centre of the local community. The governors are active and involved in the strategic development of the nursery and regularly hold leaders to account.

Since the last inspection, you have made many changes. You have been highly effective in the way you have led and managed these changes. You have brought others with you, recruited and developed a strong senior leadership team, and transformed both the curriculum and the way in which it is delivered. You are hugely aspirational for the children and have created a forward-thinking school development plan which is central to all you do and ensures continued improvement. Leaders have fostered a warm and welcoming culture. They know the children and their families well, and as one parent told me, 'When I drop my child

off at Effra, it's like leaving him with my family.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Staff receive a range of statutory training and are aware of the ways in which young children might be at risk of harm. Children's health, safety and well-being are greatly enhanced by the vigilant and consistent implementation of robust policies and procedures. Adults know what to do if they suspect a child may be at risk. Leaders work well with external agencies and follow up actions to ensure that 'no child falls through the net'. Leaders also work very well with families and ensure that early help is provided when people most need it. Children benefit hugely from the key worker system that operates across the nursery, as it ensures that information is shared quickly between home and school.

Leaders know the importance of good attendance and, where possible, provide flexibility in a weekly session pattern to accommodate working parents' shift patterns. Attendance is carefully monitored and absence concerns are followed up quickly.

Inspection findings

- The very exciting curriculum ensures that children are highly motivated and very keen to join in, across all areas of the nursery. They consistently demonstrate imagination, high levels of concentration and engagement. The curriculum is developed around the interests of children. Some children became very interested in teeth, so a dentist role-play area was created to develop their learning further. The key learning theme is linked by a core text. Multiple copies of high-quality texts are read to the children during group times and are reflected across the continuous provision in both the inside and outside classrooms. Children become familiar with the text and have opportunities to re-tell the story through props and role play. This enhances their early language acquisition, and as a result, the majority of children are confident speakers.
- Alongside an exceptionally engaging curriculum, there is a range of interventions and therapies, including music therapy, drawing, and talking and communication and language support to help those children who need it. These interventions are closely monitored and leaders work well with parents and carers to engage them and provide strategies and support that can be used at home to help children further.
- Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) underpin the curriculum. Children have developed curiosity and can explain scientific concepts using the correct vocabulary. A group of children who had made a rocket out of blocks in the role-play area could explain that the fire under the rocket forces it into space, stating that, 'pressure from the fuel builds up and forces the rocket into space'. After clearance from ground control and a count down from 5, they blasted into space and spoke about the planets, meteor showers and the asteroid belt as they looked out of the rocket. I later discovered that space had been a topic at the beginning of the year. Children had watched a moon landing and

were walking like an astronaut in role play. One girl told me, 'girls can be astronauts too, like Mae Jemison'. The learning covered in this topic had stuck and children were able to recall it and use it in their play.

- Well-resourced outside learning areas provide incidental and structured learning opportunities for children. A group of very excited children ran over to show me three strawberries they had picked. They told me that each strawberry had grown from a little white flower that had been on the plant. Children exploring minibeasts were using magnifying glasses to see their features. One child noticed the pattern on a snail shell, while another found the respiratory hole on a minibeast and said, "that's what it uses to breathe with'.
- Other children were using hand tools to saw wood. They could manipulate the tools effectively and their hand-eye coordination was good. The children worked together well, cooperating, taking turns and sharing resources. They knew how to work safely and look at things carefully. One pupil noticed circles inside the branch. An adult took the opportunity to explain how trees grow and the circles showed us where the new bark grew each year and that by counting the circles you could find out how old a tree was. Opportunities to develop mathematical skills are available across the nursery. As a result, several children count, making 1:1 correspondence to 10 and beyond. They learn the language of position as part of their everyday activities. When using the obstacle course, children can explain the way they travel using words such as going over, under, though, behind and beside.
- Trips to London and the local area are routinely used to help enhance and embed learning. Children went to look at the structure and shape of bridges across the River Thames to explore different bridge designs. They learned how some shapes are stronger than others and which materials are good for building with. When they returned, they went looking around the nursery for 'strong shapes' and used wood and other materials to create their own bridges.
- Staff have a good understanding of the differences in the emotional, physical, social and cognitive development between children of different ages. They are excellent role models and interact positively with the children. Well-trained adults support and extend learning very effectively because they know how to join in with, rather than direct, children's play. They ask open questions, genuinely enjoy working with the children and understand how to meet their needs. Leaders have been careful to ensure that the curriculum has been developed to meet the needs of the ages of children and the stage of their development. Two-year-olds engage in experiences that support their emerging understanding of themselves, others and the wider world. They do not simply follow a scaled-down version of what older children do. Transition into the main nursery happens when children are ready. They are well supported by their key worker as they gradually start to spend longer periods in the main nursery, until they are ready to transition fully.
- By the time children leave the Nursery provision, they have acquired the confidence and skills to access the curriculum on offer in Reception classes. A phonic programme is in place, which helps children learn sounds. Children start with games such as I-spy and match objects and pictures to letters. Some of the

older pupils are starting to blend sounds to spell simple words. Many children are starting to use their knowledge of sounds to write simple phrases and speech bubbles to record their ideas. There are opportunities to read and write inside and outside the nursery. Fine motor skills are being mastered well. Children use a range of mark-making tools, and many of the older children have mastered how to hold a pencil correctly when writing. One pupil told me that he loves writing so much, and got some paper and a pen to write in his role-play car.

- The very well-delivered storytime sessions ensure that all children are fully engaged in their learning. Some children participate in group sessions. They listen attentively and clearly enjoy the stories they hear. Others are supported to engage through the use of props. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported by working on their own or with one other pupil and an adult. As a result, they can access and enjoy a story session tailored to their needs. Older children getting ready for school in September listened to a story about starting school. This led to a discussion whereby children shared their thoughts, feelings and concerns. Adults skilfully helped children think through their worries, ensuring that they have a positive attitude and strategies in place to support them as they move into their new schools.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to ensure that the high standards and very effective curriculum are maintained so that all groups of pupils continue to make strong progress.

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

Lou Anderson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher for inclusion and the deputy headteacher for curriculum and governors. I scrutinised pupils' work around the nursery and through an online assessment system. I observed children's learning in the areas for two-year-olds and three- and four-year-olds both inside and out. I observed lunchtime. I talked to children throughout the day. I met with parents at the start of the school day and analysed responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I analysed staff questionnaires. I

scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans, pupils' attendance information, documentation related to safeguarding, and the school's assessment and behaviour information.