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Miss Andrea Connearn
Headteacher
Chatham Place Nursery School
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Dear Miss Connearn

Short inspection of Chatham Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 21 September 2016, 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your school has operated as part of a hard federation with St Hugh's Catholic School and Picton Children's Centre since 2007. Since the last inspection you have continued to develop and expand the federation to include the on-site day care. Your vision is crystal clear to all associated with the school and the federation. Top of your list is to provide the very best possible education to all children who attend all the institutions within the federation, including Chatham Place Nursery School.

Your personal leadership is a clear force for improvement and your ambition has ensured that the school's improvement has been sustained over time. You and all your staff have high aspirations for all groups of children. Together, you make sure that when children leave the school, they are well prepared for the next phase of their education and for the challenges that lie ahead.

You do not shy away from any shortcomings and swift action is put in place to deal with any underperformance. For example, in 2015, outcomes in mathematics dipped. Training and coaching were immediately put in place to support staff in their delivery of this area of learning. As a result, outcomes have significantly improved.

Trusting relationships have been established with parents, promoting security and consistency in children's lives. Parents told me that the school has a 'family

atmosphere' and they find staff 'approachable'. The emotional support offered by you and your staff to families in times of emotional difficulty is valued by parents. They were particularly complimentary about the effective partnership working between staff in the children's centre, on-site day care and the nursery school. Trips, to a variety of interesting places in the immediate locality and beyond, are experiences that parents believe spark children's curiosity and broaden their horizons. The support and advice given by your staff to help develop their children's learning at home is also greatly appreciated by parents. Similarly, they consider the transition arrangements that you have in place to settle children into the nursery and onwards to primary school to be effective. However, we are in agreement that the information that staff request from parents when their children start at the nursery school lacks detail.

You have the support and respect of your staff at all levels. As a leader you encourage staff to further their roles in education. Your school improvement partner was keen to tell me that the way that you manage staff with regard to career progression is 'incredible'. It is very clear to me that staff within the school work well as a team and morale is high.

The learning environment, both indoors and outside, is exciting and inspires children to learn. Children play out in all weathers, suitably clothed to protect them from the elements. Resources are of good quality and stored at child height, allowing children to make independent choices about their play. The classroom is spacious and well laid out. As a result, children move around their environment freely and safely. Children are delightful and very well behaved. They know how to take turns, share and listen to one another. As a result, Chatham Nursery School is a happy place to learn and play.

You have effectively addressed the areas for improvement highlighted at your last Ofsted inspection. Resources have been purchased to increase the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons to drive forward children's learning. Children now have more opportunities to represent their ideas and feelings through painting, which enhances their creativity. Furthermore, sessions where children are working in small groups are now as well planned as other times of the school day.

Safeguarding is effective.

The well-being and safety of children is high on the school's priority list. All visitors have their identity thoroughly checked and are given written information relating to the school's safeguarding procedures. Staff are up to date with training and current guidance. Most talk with confidence about all safeguarding procedures, including the latest national concerns of radicalisation and female genital mutilation. They are aware that anyone can make a referral to the relevant authorities should they be concerned about a child's welfare. Staff who have responsibility for safeguarding and recruitment are fully trained at the appropriate level. All documentation relating to safeguarding examined during the inspection was in good order and fit for purpose.

Children are trusting of staff and are very happy in their care. Through the curriculum and discussions, staff make children aware of the importance of keeping themselves safe, for example by not talking to strangers and using equipment safely. Filtering systems are in place to protect children when they access the computer.

Inspection findings

- You and your assistant headteacher are a strong team. Together with your staff you have created a culture where each child is valued as an individual. You both know your school well, its strengths and priorities for development.
- Through effective monitoring you and your assistant headteacher have a clear overview of the quality of teaching in your school. Training opportunities are varied and plentiful and linked closely to school priorities. As a result, staff's teaching skills are kept fresh and up to date, which is having a positive effect on outcomes for children.
- Children's progress is carefully monitored and tracked. From their different starting points, all groups of children, including the most able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in their learning.
- Learning at your school is fun. This was exemplified during our learning walk. At the start of day, I saw children skipping into the nursery school with smiles on their faces. Parents did not stay long because children settled quickly. After waving goodbye to their parents, children immediately began accessing the wide and varied range of exciting activities that had been set out. Working with their key person, children identified colours and counted in sequence to 10 and beyond. Others engaged in meaningful role play as they made meals in the home corner. Conversation flowed freely as children played and staff modelled the correct use of language well. No learning time was wasted and many children were confident in identifying initial sounds and blending these to form words. Creative opportunities were varied and allowed children to express themselves freely. However, from our observations we agreed that, at times, opportunities were missed to extend and deepen children's learning, most notably for the most able children.
- Children love to read, either on their own for pleasure or in the cosy book corner with staff. They handle books with care and turn pages correctly. Children that I shared a book with were aware that print carries meaning and were able to express their ideas and opinions about characters in the plot. For example, I was told that, 'Baby bear will be sad because Goldilocks has sat on his chair and broken it.'
- The number of disadvantaged children that attend your school fluctuates year on year. Good and effective use is made of the early years pupil premium funding to break down barriers to learning and help these children succeed. The individual needs of these children are very quickly identified. Case studies show that all groups of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, make good progress in their learning.
- Attendance is a thorny issue which the school is actively seeking, and doing all it can, to address. You and your staff quite rightly make parents aware of the impact of non-attendance on children's progress and attainment. Stringent

procedures are in place to support families who are more reluctant to send their children to school. You celebrate children's regular attendance.

- Collaborative working is a real strength of the school. Working with other nursery schools, you are devising and trialling a moderation programme and tracking and assessment system, which is to be rolled out to all early years providers in Liverpool. You also share your expertise with a cluster of nurseries in the private sector to support and challenge them to develop their practice to improve outcomes for children. Looking to the future, you are working in partnership with Liverpool Learning Partnership and the local authority to develop an early years strategy to ensure that all children, including those who are most vulnerable, have access to good-quality early years education.
- Your website is bright, colourful and easy to navigate. However, it does not meet the current guidelines set out by the Department for Education. For example, there is no special educational needs information report and the actual impact of the spending of the early years pupil premium funding for the last academic year is not clear. Furthermore, information with regard to governance does not meet requirements. The dates that governors were appointed, their terms of office and any business or pecuniary interest are not detailed on the website.
- Governors know the school well and share your vision for the school wholeheartedly. They are aware of school priorities and the progress that groups of children make. Governors are not afraid to make difficult decisions to ensure the success of the school and the federation. Support and challenge is offered to the school in equal measure. However, governors do not analyse raw data independently of you and your deputy headteacher. Consequently, the level of challenge is not as rigorous as it could be.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all children are challenged to achieve their very best, particularly the most able
- they obtain more detailed information from parents about what their children like and can do when they start at the nursery school
- the website is compliant and is checked on a regular basis to ensure that it remains so
- governors analyse raw data independently of senior leaders to ensure that the level of challenge they offer the school is even greater than it is now.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your deputy and the chair of the governing body. I also had informal discussions with a group of parents and staff. I went on a tour of the school accompanied by you to see the learning that was taking place. I listened to children read and observed behaviour at different times of the day. I also took account of the responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire completed by parents and staff.

I considered how well the school had responded to the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. The progress and achievement that all groups of children have made in recent years was also considered. I looked closely at what steps had been taken by you to ensure that the quality of teaching remained good. I also considered whether safeguarding arrangements were effective and up to date with recent guidance. Furthermore, I reviewed the spending of the early years pupil premium to ensure that it was having a positive impact on those children who are entitled to it. Finally, I considered the work of the governors to assess the level of support and challenge offered to the school.