

23 July 2019

Mrs Sarah Helm
Headteacher
Old Church Nursery School
Walter Terrace
Stepney
London
E1 0RJ

Dear Mrs Helm

Short inspection of Old Church Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 10 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 second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be outstanding in May 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

You and your staff are dedicated to providing the children with the best possible start and, as a result, the school is a welcoming and inclusive environment. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school's work and there is a strong partnership between staff and parents. They particularly appreciate that the leadership team welcomes them and their children to school every morning. You provide parents with many opportunities to support their children's learning. For example, parents spoke enthusiastically about the recent 'international day' that reflected the wide diversity of the school community. One parent told me that it was 'wonderful'. They especially enjoyed learning about other cultures and seeing families wearing their national costumes.

Children's behaviour and attitudes are excellent and they are inquisitive and self-regulated learners. I observed children being polite and considerate of each other. For example, the children sat around the campfire patiently as they waited for popcorn to be cooked. They demonstrated an awareness of the needs of others as they organised between themselves who should try the popcorn first.

Lunchtime provides further opportunities for children to develop their communication and social skills as they engage in purposeful conversation with adults and their peers. Children are encouraged to develop confidence by cutting up their own food and making healthy eating choices.

Teachers and key workers provide opportunities for stimulating learning experiences by planning activities or topics that engage the children's interest. Consequently, children are motivated to learn and try out new activities. You told me that children had become fascinated with owls through their recent 'Owl Babies' topic. As a result, a falconry expert came to the school so that the children had the opportunity to interact with real owls.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding policies and procedures are in place. The governors are equally committed to the school and possess a range of relevant skills. As a result they are clear about their statutory responsibility to safeguard children. The chair of the governing board regularly checks the single central record and all checks on adults working at the school meet statutory requirements. Records of meetings with other agencies are meticulous. Leaders work in effective partnership with outside agencies so that all children are kept safe from harm.

All staff, including volunteers and governors, have received 'Prevent' duty and 'Keeping children safe in education' training. Staff know the signs that can indicate that a child is at risk of harm and the procedures they must follow if they have concerns. Parents that I spoke to, and those who responded to Ofsted's survey, overwhelmingly said that their children are safe and happy at the school.

Comprehensive risk assessments are undertaken for all off-site activities so that children are kept safe. The school has many animals and a working beehive so that health and safety is a high priority. Children learn to care for and respect the animals while developing an understanding of the importance of hygiene.

Inspection findings:

- Our first key line of enquiry was to consider what actions leaders have taken to ensure that the school receives formal feedback from parents throughout the year, focusing on the school development plan. We agreed this as a key line of enquiry because this was an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Records and surveys kept by the school show leaders are proactive and respond positively to formal feedback from parents. You and the governing board provide an in-depth action plan for parents which demonstrates the importance leaders place on their views. You told me that you present, discuss and review the action plan termly during 'parent voice' meetings. Weekly coffee mornings provide informal opportunities for parents to offer feedback in a relaxed and friendly environment. Parents spoke highly of the school and say that they can communicate openly with you and your staff. They are confident that their contributions to school improvements are valued.
- Our second key line of enquiry explored how leaders are fulfilling their statutory duties to ensure that all children, particularly those who are vulnerable, are provided with the best possible start to their education. We agreed this key line

as information relating to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) was not readily available on the school's website. You promptly rectified this during the inspection and provided documentation of the school's local offer.

- Records show that leaders contribute effectively to multi-agency meetings and work closely with outside agencies to provide appropriate support for children and families in need. Strong links with other professionals and agencies, such as the health visitor, the speech and language service and educational psychologists, confirm that the needs of children, including those with SEND, are being actively addressed.
- Leaders told me that there has been an increase in the numbers of children arriving at the school with complex needs. Action research has led to the development of outstanding practices to support children with complex needs. You recognise that this could develop further so that you can share your excellence with other schools.
- The chair of governors and other members of the governing body make regular visits to the school and fulfil their statutory duties. Governors spoke knowledgably about the impact of the early years pupil premium grant. They challenge leaders appropriately to ensure that funding is spent effectively to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children. For example, leaders have targeted children with delayed speech by providing high-quality one-to-one support to accelerate their progress. Consequently, they catch up quickly with their peers.
- Our final key line of enquiry considered what actions leaders have taken to ensure that transition arrangements are fit for purpose so that children are ready for the next stage in their education. We agreed this key line because you told me that the children begin reception in 27 different primary schools. Parents receive information about transition arrangements from home to nursery but the information about transition arrangements from nursery to primary school was unclear.
- Leaders told me that families of children, including those with SEND, are supported effectively to ensure a smooth transition. Meetings are arranged between the school and other agencies so that the best possible placement can be found for children with complex needs. Teachers and key workers ensure that the new school receives a 'school passport', which acts as the child's voice, providing valuable information about the child. The key worker of each child will visit the new school with the children and parents. Leaders told me that children are invited to stay at the school for the morning session and have lunch. This provides children with the opportunity to explore their new school and meet their new teacher.
- Learning journeys are well documented by photographs and skilful observations written by teachers and key workers. They show a rich, play-based curriculum, which encourages enquiry and problem solving. This engages the children's interest and ensures that they leave the school as confident learners. As a result of high-quality teaching and effective support of key workers, children make rapid progress from their low starting points. Many children leave the school with

skills above those typically seen for their age in all areas of learning, especially in speaking.

- Strong parental partnership, primary school links, effective guidance and support from external agencies and successful transition arrangements ensure that children are ready for the next stage in their education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop the provision for children with complex needs so that the school's excellent practice can be shared with other settings.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Tower Hamlets. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dawn Titus
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other senior leaders and teachers. I met with five representatives from the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I looked over a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school development plan, information on the progress of children, learning journeys, the single central record and risk assessments. I spoke to a large number of parents, the local authority head of school improvement as well as the school improvement partner. I observed learning in all classrooms and in the school grounds. I spoke to children informally over lunch to gather their views. I considered the views of 31 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey 'Parent view'. Thirty-six parent texts and 14 responses to the staff survey were also considered.