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Mrs Becky Dolamore
Headteacher
Rachel Keeling Nursery School
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Dear Mrs Dolamore

Short inspection of Rachel Keeling Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 2018, 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 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

You and your leadership team have maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your deputy are an inspirational leadership team and your development of a warm family ethos encourages staff and children to excel. You are committed to growing a learning community in which all practitioners regularly reflect on their practice to ensure the very best outcomes and well-being for all children. All staff questioned said that they feel respected and well supported.

You welcome the support and challenge offered by the governing body. You, along with governors, constantly review practice and have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. Governors are active participants in the life of the school and subsequently know the school well. They seek training to ensure that they have the necessary understanding of exemplary practice in order to be able to carry out their role effectively. The local authority views the school as a centre of excellence.

Parents and children are welcomed by name on arrival and appreciate being 'made to feel part of the school family'. This ensures that children settle quickly. Children are happy, confident, independent and curious learners. Children use adults to support them in their learning journey but are not reliant on them. The wide range of engaging, exciting resources and activities provide rich, varied and imaginative experiences.

The parents I spoke to and those that commented on the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, spoke highly of the quality of education provided for

their children. One parent said that the nursery provides 'activities and adventures to engage young minds every day'; another said, 'Experiences provide him with a solid foundation for the remainder of his years.' Parents also said that they appreciate the events that the school runs to support its strong community ethos. One parent said: 'The Saturday garden brings whole families together, strengthening the community bond.' You highlighted to me that you want to work even more closely with families to ensure that the children continue to thrive beyond their time at Rachel Keeling.

You have a new assessment system in place which is enabling you to track the progress made by children in detail. Children are assessed on entry and then regularly monitored against developmental milestones. Children's progress is frequently shared with parents and carers and is evident in high-quality learning journals. You have established a thoughtful approach to settling new children and to supporting transfer to Reception. The strong practice and robust monitoring of progress ensure that the vast majority of children make substantial and sustained progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have established a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Governors and leaders understand their roles and responsibilities well and have audited practice to ensure that procedures are robust. Staff know the correct procedures to follow if they have a concern and report these in a timely and appropriate manner.

You and your staff know families extremely well and you are committed to supporting families to ensure the very best outcomes for all children. All staff are vigilant and there is a clear collective responsibility for keeping children safe.

The children's well-being is at the centre of everything you do. The formal assessment processes you have in place to assess well-being ensure that no child goes unnoticed.

You ensure that your training and that of governors are kept up to date in child protection, safeguarding and safer recruitment. Safeguarding training has been delivered to all staff and they are aware of the signs of potential risks. Staff and parents, in the Ofsted questionnaire, said that they are confident that children are safe and well cared for. One parent described the nursery as 'a stable, caring environment in which my child can flourish.' Another appreciated the school's celebration of diversity. The promotion of British values is intertwined into the school's values and is referred to by all staff throughout the school day.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that my first key line of enquiry was to find out how effectively you and the governing body are using the early years pupil premium grant to improve achievement, so that greater numbers are working at the standard expected for their age when they leave. We chose this line of enquiry because, although the

report for expenditure of the grant is detailed, the rationale for expenditure is less clear.

- You and your staff are acutely aware of children who are eligible for the pupil premium grant and monitor these children carefully throughout the day to ensure that they are being challenged appropriately. You and the nursery team meet daily to evaluate children's learning to ensure that all children's learning needs are being met and change the provision accordingly.
- The organisation of staff roles into a three-week cycle enables continuity in learning and the development of strong relationships with children. Children are at the centre of learning experiences and their voices are listened to and valued. Adult interactions are purposeful and enable children to explore their thinking and reflect on their learning.
- Learning journals illustrate the wide range of exciting learning experiences that the children enjoy and show evidence of children's strong progress. Practitioners ensure that next steps are followed up and met quickly. Activities such as 'shopper of the week' enable learning in a real context and encourage early writing for a purpose. Specific sustained projects, such as the animation project, have been specifically developed to motivate children eligible for the early years grant. These projects promote a focused journey of learning over time and enable children to establish strong friendships.
- Leaders work alongside families to help them to understand the nursery school's philosophy towards learning through play. This helps children be able to engage quickly in messy play and take risks.
- As a result of your actions, children quickly begin to make substantial progress which is sustained throughout their time at the nursery. Many children enter the nursery at a level below where they should be for their age. The exceptional work that you and your team do results in the vast majority of children leaving the nursery at age-related expectations and some exceeding expectations. There are also rapid improvements in engagement, speaking and listening, and the ability to play independently and collaboratively.
- For the second key line of enquiry, I explored how effectively you have maintained the quality of education and shared practice beyond the school. We agreed on this line of enquiry because it was identified as an area for improvement in the previous inspection.
- You and your leaders have maintained a high quality of education and further developed pedagogy to keep up to date with current effective early years practice. You and your leaders continue to seek and provide practitioners with the most up-to-date, high-quality training to further develop practice. You facilitate time for staff to regularly reflect on and debate the way they teach. Staff appreciate your encouragement to take risks and be innovative.
- You have developed the website as a tool to promote your exemplary practice. This has resulted in schools and publishing companies contacting you to share your practice further. You and your deputy make effective use of social media to share and discuss innovative early years practice which benefits your own school.

- You are fully committed to improving early years practice for all children and are now working with other local nurseries to provide training opportunities further afield. Your membership of a teaching school alliance also enables you to train teachers for the future. Visits from other schools in the UK and abroad are welcomed, but you also ensure that these visits have a clearly defined outcome for the visitor and practitioners within your setting.
- For the final key line of enquiry, I evaluated to what extent you and your leaders support children to become resilient, independent learners. We chose this because you felt that this was a particular strength of the school.
- The well-being of children is a clear focus for all adults. As a result, children are resilient and independent learners. The thoughtful organisation of the curriculum and abundant high-quality resources ensure that children are highly motivated. I observed children learning independently for extended periods of time. They were not easily distracted and did not distract others.
- A range of highly motivating and engaging activities inside and out encourage independent free choice. I observed the children moving between rooms and open spaces with purpose. They choose where to play and interact confidently and appropriately with others. The continuous breakfast and snack table and careful seating at lunchtime encourage children to prepare their own food, tidy up and even wash up.
- The innovative way that you have zoned the outside learning space enables children to explore a vast range of experiences. I observed children learning to use a two-wheel balance bike and having the resilience to continue to practise in order to move on to a pedal bike. Children told me how to make a fire safely and I observed further strengthening of the community ethos through adult-led singing around the warming firepit.
- The innovative allocation of a unique puppet doll to each class promotes emotional literacy and self-esteem, and supports children's understanding of empathy while also enabling staff to tackle more challenging issues with young children. I saw children mesmerised by the puppet and keen to respond thoughtfully to the puppet's questions.
- Parents' comments in the Ofsted online questionnaire illustrate their appreciation of the work that the nursery does to promote resilience and independence. A parent commented that the nursery 'encourages responsibility, independence and personal expression'. As a result, children at Rachel Keeling are extremely well prepared for transition to Reception academically, socially and emotionally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- families continue to develop their understanding of the school's learning philosophy to support children further to become confident, independent and excited life-long learners.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Morrison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the office manager. I met with parents informally as they arrived at school with their children. I met with the chair of the governing body and one other governor, and I also met with the local authority school improvement adviser. I visited all classrooms with senior leaders, spoke to children and looked at the activities in the classrooms and the outdoor areas. I viewed 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I scrutinised a range of documents, including those relating to self-evaluation and planning, the school's assessment information, children's learning journals and safeguarding policies and procedures.