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Ms Nicola Oldhams
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Oldhams

Short inspection of Chelwood 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 outstanding in September 2011.

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 deputy are not complacent and have successfully created a school which has high expectations.

The previous inspection identified the need to sharpen monitoring to ensure further improvements to children's academic outcomes. The school took speedy action and the leadership team and roles were reviewed and updated. As a result, clear systems are now in place to monitor children's progress and attainment more closely across all areas of the early years curriculum. These systems, along with high-quality professional development and coaching for staff, ensure consistently high-quality learning and accurate assessments across the school. All children make excellent progress. The curriculum is exceptionally well planned and linked to the interests of the children.

You and your well-qualified and dedicated staff team make Chelwood a wonderful place to learn by planning stimulating learning across all areas of the early years curriculum. Parents value the home visit and the many opportunities, like the July 'fun day' and 'stay and play' sessions, for families to get to know the school before they start. Parents are effusive in their praise for all aspects of the school's work. They feel that their children's needs and interests are taken into account fully, children are valued for their individuality and they thrive from day one.

Your ambition has ensured that the school's improvement has been sustained over time. In April 2014 you became a designated national teaching school, building on the success of the learning alliance you formed in 2012, with five other maintained nursery schools and the Department of Educational Studies at Goldsmiths College, University of London. This partnership offers a unique school-based route into early years teaching, and provides training and development to new and experienced school staff and two local authorities.

Chelwood shares its outstanding practice with others. The capacity of all leaders, managers and governors to drive continued improvement at the school is evident. Last year you were seconded to lead the local authority's early years team during a time of transition. You are held in high regard by the local authority which, along with Goldsmiths College, signposts to others Chelwood's excellent early years practice. You are proactive and outward-looking, ensuring the best for the children at your school, while considering the needs of the wider community you serve.

The school identifies those children who may qualify for the early years pupil premium funding. However, you and your governors are also aware of the need to consolidate the existing strong partnerships with parents, by making sure that more parents are aware of this recently introduced funding and its impact. You and your senior leaders accept that they could be doing more to share the impact of this funding through using the school's website. You are aware of the need to ensure that the information about this funding is more widely accessible so that all eligible three- and four-year-olds are swiftly identified.

Safeguarding is effective.

The nursery has a culture where everyone is responsible for protecting the welfare and safety of children. Training and updates throughout the year ensure that children's well-being is central to the school's work. All staff quickly and appropriately report any concerns, which are investigated and kept under review. Full use is made of the available agencies so, when necessary, correct actions are followed through and additional support accessed.

The secure premises and checks on visitors' identity effectively limit the extent to which people can enter the school building or play areas. Leaders have established clear rules regarding the use of mobile phones and cameras. Staff understand the need for clear policies and they understand the range of welfare concerns that may affect children at the school. For example, they have a deep understanding of how important it is to be aware of children's changing emotions. They are aware of the indications of extremism and radicalisation, and of female genital mutilation and abuse. Governors and the leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- You, your senior leadership team and governors rigorously evaluate the work of the school. Leaders' planned improvements are focused sharply on children's learning. Your strong commitment to children's successful progress is communicated clearly by all staff and known to parents. All staff carefully track children's progress. Effective, daily team meetings ensure that they quickly identify when a child's learning falters or accelerates. Your senior leaders check closely and frequently that planned learning moves children on, improving their progress and taking full account of their needs.
- Governors are deeply committed to the school's success. They visit regularly and use their collective skills and expertise well, contributing to the success of the school. They remain objective and suitably ambitious when identifying priorities and when planning for necessary developments. They are acutely aware of the need to ensure ongoing excellence while managing tightening budgets and maintaining financial solvency.
- From day one, children look forward to seeing their key workers and settle quickly and happily. This is because of a range of highly effective transition activities that take place before a child starts at the nursery. As one parent explained, everything is familiar so they feel 'at home'. Another parent said, 'It's phenomenal!'
- Care is taken by each key worker to find out from their home visit what captures each of their children's interests. The youngest two-year-old children were seen engaging well with their key workers because the adults had ensured that activities caught their child's attention. For example, one key worker skilfully played alongside their child in a safari den, inviting comparisons between the giraffe they played with at home and the giraffes at school.
- The assessment profiles contain rich evidence because staff knowledgeably develop children's curiosity and interests exceptionally well. They track each individual's achievements meticulously, using information of what the child can do to plan future, engaging, learning experiences. Parents value the insightful feedback on their child's learning and the detailed termly reports, which capture their child's views of what they enjoy and have achieved.
- Professional development and performance management systems support staff very well. Your deputy head works closely with all staff. Like you, she has a passionate commitment to ensuring that every child receives the personal and academic support they need to help them excel. Her skilful coaching is evident in the excellent early years practice being delivered by staff. The exceptionally well-organised learning areas, set up daily by staff, guarantee that every available space is used to the best advantage. Classrooms, conservatories, walkways and outdoor areas are inviting and inspire purposeful investigation, creative play and exploration.

- Children's views are valued. They are invited to make considered choices, recently voting on what furniture or equipment to purchase to enhance the outdoor play area. All were encouraged to consider value for money, the items' suitability and to justify their preferences before casting their vote.
- You and your team have created well-established relationships between home and the school. There are frequent opportunities for staff and parents to speak to one another. Parents spoken to at the start of the day were very appreciative of the time and support staff give to help them, their families and their child. They value the inclusivity of Chelwood. Under the strong guidance of your inclusion and diversity leader, staff expertly meet the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, they make equally good and outstanding progress similar to their peers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- they communicate with greater clarity to parents and the wider community the impact of the recent early years pupil premium funding for qualifying three- and four-year-olds.

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

Yours sincerely

Jean Thwaites
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the visit, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, members of staff, a representative of the local authority and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke informally to parents at the beginning of the day. I considered the views of parents from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 13 questionnaires completed by members of staff. Visits were made to the indoor and outdoor environments to observe children's learning. I reviewed a range of nursery documentation, records of your checks to safeguard children, and scrutinised records of children's progress and attainment.