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Miss Emma Pobjoy  
Headteacher  
Pastures Way Nursery School  
Pastures Way  
Luton  
Bedfordshire  
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Dear Miss Pobjoy

### **Short inspection of Pastures Way Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 2017, 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 March 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

Pastures Way Nursery is a happy and nurturing school. Effective transition systems between year groups ensure that children settle quickly into their routines and engage well with each other and adults. This was evident in this inspection so early in the academic year, where very young children were seen to be settled into routines, motivated, engaged and happy to come to school.

Staff are friendly and welcoming and are always available to deal with any questions from parents. The flexible start to the day allows parents to comfortably communicate any concerns or catch up with their child's progress within a good time period at the start and end of the session. This happens seamlessly as part of the school day.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a strong and improved focus on speaking and listening. Children learn in lessons where there is a strong focus on vocabulary. In all activities, adults use a variety of approaches to develop children's speaking and listening: the careful modelling of speech; using actions to reinforce the spoken word; and, in many sessions, using sign language to support learning.

Children can take part in carefully planned activities which ensure that the individual needs of the children are met. Teachers use resources purposefully to enable

children to achieve their next steps in learning. Children respond and engage well in adult-led and independent activities and, as a result, make good and, in many cases better-than-expected, progress across all areas of learning.

Parents value the communication and support from school staff. Parents I spoke with, and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, were extremely positive about the staff and the progress their children have made. One parent said: 'Staff at Pastures Way are caring and nurturing. The baby team were like a second family to our daughter.'

Leaders and governors share a clear plan which builds on the strengths identified in the previous inspection. You have developed strong systems and processes for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has improved and this is having a positive impact on how well children are achieving. Staff consider children's individual needs and plan the next steps to move children's learning on. However, leaders have prioritised this as an area for development and actions are in place to develop the needs of less-experienced staff further by sharing best practice across the school to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.

You identified that assessment of children's learning in the past has not been as accurate as it could be, due to some staff not having the necessary experience. You have addressed this within the organisational changes you have recently made. You have worked with the local authority to ensure that there is clear guidance for all staff on how to assess children's learning. However, as yet, this is not being consistently applied across the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The leadership team has established a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are well kept.

You and your team work hard to support vulnerable children and families. Leaders liaise closely with parents through home visits, the local children's centre and external agencies to ensure that support is in place immediately children arrive at the school. You ensure that you gather the necessary information in advance for children who may be at risk. This allows leaders to support vulnerable children from the beginning of their life at Pastures Way Nursery. Consequently, these children enjoy a good start and settle into the nursery very quickly.

Effective systems and procedures are in place for staff to communicate and record concerns about children who may be at risk. Records of individual children show a detailed timeline of actions and events leading to clear actions.

All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, say that children are safe at school. All staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire agree

that children are safe. One parent responded, saying that they 'always feel happy leaving their daughter in safe and caring hands'.

## **Inspection findings**

- To check that the school remains good, my first key line of enquiry was to look at the teaching of boys' writing, as this was highlighted as an area for improvement in the previous Ofsted report. You and senior leaders have made writing a priority and staff carefully plan activities which develop children's early writing skills. Children regularly take part in activities which help develop the ability to hold and use objects. For example, children learn to hold utensils when participating in cooking activities, transport large objects from one place to another and manage tools well. I observed a three-year-old boy confidently using a hammer to crush petals in order to explore the different dyes which make up the colours of the petals. Evidence in children's books shows how individual children's experimental mark making quickly progresses to purposeful letter formation. In addition, the school's own assessment information indicates that children's, particularly boys', writing skills have improved over the last academic year, with a much higher proportion of boys now reaching the expected standard and above.
- There is a consistency in the approach to the teaching of communication and language. Adult-led sessions ensure that children have opportunities to develop speaking, listening and writing skills and apply them across a range of learning areas. For example, adults carefully model language and ask children open-ended questions to extend their thinking skills. Children can build on prior knowledge to support new learning. Some adults are highly skilled in their practice and there are plans in place for them to share their best practice with less-experienced staff to improve the quality of teaching further across the school.
- The previous inspection report highlighted the need to improve teaching by challenging children throughout adult-led sessions and this became my second line of enquiry. You have adopted an individualised learning approach which focuses on children's next steps. Weekly meetings identify most-able children, as well as those who may need extra support to make the progress they should. Teachers plan together across year groups, ensuring that there is a consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Children learn through play with children who have similar starting points, regardless of their age, and this ensures that children's learning is not limited, allowing children to learn at their own pace. Consequently, children, including the most able, make good and better progress.
- Governors ensure that the early years pupil premium funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged and vulnerable children. Additional adult support is used to provide focused teaching and learning for individual children, providing challenge and support when needed.
- In addition, leaders and teachers support children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities well. Skilled teachers and adults deliver specifically planned activities in small-group sessions which are short and focused on children's specific needs. For example, sessions are planned to encourage children's attention and engagement. This has had a positive impact on individual

children's ability and confidence in coping with and succeeding at whole-class activities and during independent learning sessions. As a result, children make good progress from their varying starting points.

- The previous inspection report highlighted the need for staff to be given specific targets to improve their teaching, which leaders could check. Therefore, my final line of enquiry was to look at how you manage the performance of staff. You have put in place a thorough induction process and developed effective staff appraisal that ensures that they are supported with training to improve their teaching practice to provide the best quality of teaching for the children in their care. You set staff targets in line with whole-school improvement priorities and targets which relate to children's learning. Regular weekly meetings and termly progress meetings ensure that teachers are accountable for the progress children make. This has improved children's achievement, with many now making better-than-expected progress across many areas of learning.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- systems for assessing children's attainment and progress are fully embedded across the school
- the quality of teaching and learning is further improved by sharing the best teaching and learning practice within the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Cindy Impey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, staff and four governors and spoke to parents before the start of school.

I visited all classes. Last year's examples of children's work were looked at. I observed children's behaviour during activities and as they moved around the classes.

A number of documents were reviewed, including the single central record of employment checks, the school's self-evaluation and children's assessment and progress information.

I also took account of the 10 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, completed by parents, nine text messages from parents and seven responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.