

11 December 2018

Ms Rachel Hedley
Executive Headteacher
Maytree Nursery School
155 Clarence Crescent
London
SW4 8LN

Dear Ms Hedley

Short inspection of Maytree Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has successfully federated with two other nursery schools, Holmewood and Triangle. Governance continues to be a strength of the school. Governors' capacity and skills have developed further through the federation. You are now executive headteacher of the federation. Your deputy at the time of the last inspection is head of school at Maytree. The last few years have seen growth in the provision for two-year-olds. New staff have been appointed across the nursery. There is an established programme of professional development in place for all staff. Exciting times lie ahead as the nursery will move to a new building shortly. Together with leaders and governors, this transition has been planned to be smooth and seamless.

Children enter school enthusiastically. Parents report that their children 'love nursery' and 'happily talk about their day'. A feeling of fun exists throughout. This is supported by the strong relationships that exist between staff and children. Adults genuinely enjoy being with children, skilfully engage them and support their learning throughout the day.

Leaders have addressed the area identified at the time of the last inspection. Snack times now promote social interactions and encourage independence. Children have opportunities to pour drinks, and to develop communication and number skills by cutting, counting and sharing fruit.

A range of ways exist to engage parents and carers as partners and to increase their skills. These include 'family Wednesday' workshops. These sessions are well attended by parents, who report that they help them develop ways to support learning at home and understand the curriculum better.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is taken very seriously. It is central to the work of the nursery. Robust systems are in place to safeguard children. You have ensured that staff are well trained and supported in their safeguarding responsibilities. Leaders are proactive in making sure that support is in place for families. Leaders work well with external agencies and referrals to the local authority are rigorously followed up.

Risk assessments are thorough and ensure that all equipment and resources are safe for children to use. Your philosophy of encouraging children to take risks, for example when climbing the laurel in the grounds or using real tools when cutting, sawing and hammering, is underpinned by careful training and guidance. This has resulted in confident children who understand how to keep themselves safe.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed upon key lines of enquiry, the first of which was to consider the capacity of leaders to sustain the outstanding quality of education observed at the time of the last inspection.
- Leaders regularly monitor learning across the nursery. They make accurate evaluations of strengths and weaknesses. They are highly reflective and constantly strive to make the provision even better. Careful, effective feedback and advice are given to staff. This helps to improve children's outcomes.
- Leaders are aware that, although practice is strong across the provision, there is some variation in the teaching of new things and the promotion of language and thinking within the provision. The strongest practice is evident in the three-and-four-year-olds provision. The new building will make it easier to share this exceptional practice with the two-year-olds provision.
- Learning environments provide a range of age-appropriate opportunities for children to explore and create in. A small forest area has been created in a space in the outside area for three- and four-year-olds. On the day of the inspection, children were engrossed in a wood-modelling activity which involved them sawing, peeling bark and hollowing out the middle of their wooden tubes to make decorative jewellery. Throughout the task, children demonstrated careful handling of tools, and very high levels of concentration. Inside this provision, similar high-quality opportunities ensured that children at a woodworking table were able to further develop their good fine-motor skills as they held nails and tapped them into wood, using hammers carefully and safely.
- Significant changes to planning have been made, as a result of leaders' evaluations. These are helping to strengthen communication and mark-making skills, particularly in the rooms for three- and four-year-olds. Planning now builds on from children's interests and things they find exciting in the nursery and at

home. The local area is frequently used. Trips to nearby shops, the park and along bus routes now take place. These help to ensure that children quickly gain a range of memorable and meaningful experiences. Children are motivated and excited by these experiences. They proudly showed detailed pictures of boats on the River Thames that they had drawn after a trip to Chelsea Bridge.

- Practitioners are flexible and take advantage of all opportunities to enhance learning and experience. An example of this was observed as the wind in the outside area grew in strength. Streamers and windmills were brought out to help children experience the effects of the weather. Similarly, story time acts as a stimulus to allow practitioners to plan learning carefully around the interests of children. The concept of time and writing numbers had been expertly developed as adults noticed children's engagement in making playdough birthday cakes, following a story time about a dog's birthday party.
- Adults across the nursery are good language role models for children. Some use questioning highly effectively to get a very clear understanding of children's thoughts and ideas. In these instances, adults challenge and extend learning as part of children's talk and play. Some adults are very skilled at demonstrating their own thinking, or 'modelling' how to talk about thinking to children. This helps children to share their ideas and gets them thinking hard, explaining their ideas, problem-solving and working through their thoughts in a clear and structured way. Specific strategies are in place to support language development and understanding for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. An example of this benefiting all children was observed in the use of Makaton by both adults and children to enable effective engagement and communication.
- The next focus of the inspection was to consider how effective leaders' actions have been in ensuring that all children make good progress, from their various starting points. Learning environments are bright and attractive, with a wide range of stimulating opportunities. Children access resources and can bring them from one area of the nursery to another to support their learning. This promotes independent thinking by helping them to make decisions about their learning.
- Early assessment data is carefully moderated across the team to ensure that adults plan interventions to support learning. This year's information has highlighted that a significant group have additional speech and language needs. As a result, this area has been given a high profile across the curriculum. External support has been brought in to support adults in planning and delivery. Leaders have ensured that additional language groups take place daily for target groups. Routines are well established and high expectations are evident. Children enjoy and look forward to attending, they participate well and records show this intervention is having a positive impact on language use and development.
- All adults know the children and their needs very well. Assessment systems are highly effective. Adults make careful observations of what children can do and identify what they need to do next to ensure that they develop their skills and knowledge well. As a result of very careful checks on their learning, all children make very good, sustained progress during their time with you.
- There is a strong culture of 'every second counts' across the nursery. Mealtimes are an enjoyable experience. They are calm and orderly and expertly used to

develop social skills and turn-taking. Children sit with adults as they take part in conversations. Children use cutlery well, listen politely to each other and demonstrate lovely manners.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of the provision is strengthened, even further, by ensuring that the strongest practice is shared across the provision
- the highly effective actions to improve mark-making and speech and language development are sustained.

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

Yours sincerely

Lou Anderson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the visit, meetings were held with senior leaders, members of the executive board, a representative of the local authority and parents. I jointly observed teaching and learning with the head of school, visiting all classrooms including the provision for two-year-olds and lunchtime. I reviewed a wide range of documentation, including evidence of children's work, assessment and tracking data, records and minutes of governors' meetings, safeguarding information, the school action plan and self-evaluation documents.