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Ms Christine Willmott
Headteacher
The Wharf Nursery School & Children's Centre
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Dear Ms Willmott

Short inspection of The Wharf Nursery School & Children's Centre

Following my visit to the school on 24 November 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 good in September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You are highly committed and determined to secure the best possible outcomes for all children. Staff and governors share your aims. Together you are realising your motto: to be 'at the heart of the community'. Leaders, staff and governors have made the right changes to help to strengthen the provision. As a result, all children make good progress from their different starting points and the leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Everyone cares about the children and their families. Staff form very strong and effective relationships with children and parents, as soon as they join the school. Parents appreciate this greatly. One parent said, 'The staff are very supportive and so friendly.' Many others echoed this view, as well as identifying how much their children enjoy school. Indeed, the two-year-old children demonstrated how just much they love school in the soft play area. They did this by sliding confidently down the slide and racing back up the steps with squeals of delight and much laughter. In the outside area, the older children relished the challenge of pedalling real bicycles and climbing into tunnels, all with the watchful support of the dedicated staff.

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Staff use the information from checks on children's learning effectively to plan the next steps in their development. Children's 'learning journeys' show that staff identify correctly what children need to learn next and use this well to ensure that

they make progress. You have also ensured that tasks and activities are challenging for children, especially the most able. For example, children have opportunities to visit the 'challenge table' in their classroom to find ways to solve a problem such as finding a range of ways to cut out different shapes.

Safeguarding is effective.

You rightly recognise that details are important when keeping children safe, stating, 'It doesn't matter how small the concern is, it is still a concern.' Staff receive up-to-date training so that they know what to do if they are worried about a child. You use your close links with the children's centre to provide prompt, effective and appropriate help to families. Where necessary, you challenge others to take the right action at the right time. High-quality records detail this work. You and the safeguarding governor refine safeguarding arrangements so that they are fit for purpose. Everyone is vigilant and proactive in promoting children's welfare.

The clear routines, caring relationships and high expectations for children's behaviour help to make children feel safe at school. For example, the children know that they share their lunch at a table, talking with friends and a trusted adult. They are proud to receive a 'stamp' for waiting their turn and trying new foods. Children behave extremely well throughout the day. As a result, the school is a safe, supportive and harmonious place to be.

Inspection findings

- You and the staff have made some very positive changes to teaching and learning, making good use of valuable support from the local authority. The classrooms and outside areas are interesting, inviting environments that provide children with a wide range of stimulating activities. Staff interact very well and form strong relationships with children that enable them to take the next steps in their development. Consequently, children make good progress across the areas of learning.
- Activities are sufficiently challenging for the most able children. Last year, around a third of children exceeded the expectations for their age. Staff identify demanding next steps that extend most-able children's learning well. For example, children were making sheep, drawing the wool using the circular marks that they had just learned to show that they were fluffy. The teacher supported some children to write their own names on the back of their sheep, making sure that they wrote their letters correctly.
- Staff have high expectations of what children can achieve. They talk with children at length using a wide vocabulary and cover a broad range of topics. One member of staff spoke to a group of children, who were pretending to shop with credit cards, about how they work. She explained, 'The banks are in charge of all of the money and adults have to pay them back.'

- Last year, you made some effective improvements to the teaching of early writing skills. Around the nursery, there are many opportunities for children to write such as the 'building site', the big chalks to use on the playgrounds and clipboards at the table of mobile telephones. Staff challenge children to 'write' in a range of activities. As a result, children's attainment in writing has increased. However, these improvements came about because other schools you work with decided to develop this area of learning. You do not yet analyse children's progress information routinely to identify precisely where improvements can be made.
- You support parents well so that they can help promote their child's development. Parents value the workshops that you have provided such as 'learning through play'. In particular, parents appreciate how well you prepare children for starting school. Some spoke about the value of activities such as the 'school' role-play area and the 'starting school' workshop for parents. They felt that their children benefited from acting out going to school, whilst the workshops helped the parents feel more prepared to help their children move to their new schools.
- The special educational needs coordinator is highly effective and makes the best use of available resources to provide support that closely matches children's individual needs. She monitors the impact of this support carefully and adjusts it if it is not effective enough. Therefore, children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make rapid progress from their starting points. Nevertheless, you recognise that you could make even better use of this leader's, and other leaders', skills by empowering them to develop other aspects of the school.
- Some children join the school with skills and abilities that are less than typical for their age, particularly in communication and language. Leaders have ensured that staff have the skills to use a range of different ways to communicate with children such as through signing and using pictures. All staff use these confidently across the nursery, enabling all children to participate in learning. For example, two-year-old children enjoyed signing and singing along to 'Twinkle, twinkle'.
- The early years pupil premium funding is used well to improve disadvantaged children's learning. These children receive individualised support in areas of learning such as personal, social and emotional development, reading and writing. The most able disadvantaged children also receive extra help, taking part in 'challenge' groups or confidence-building activities. As a result, disadvantaged children, including the most able, make good progress across the areas of learning.
- Disadvantaged two-year-old children get off to a good start in the 'little stars' class. The two-year-old children learn important communication and language skills and also build personal skills so that they can care for themselves. These young children showed that they can follow instructions to find their shoes and try to put them on, rightly celebrating every success! However, leaders and governors are not able to explain fully the impact of this provision. Governors' visits and leaders' reports are not sufficiently focused on the effect of this and other work to improve children's achievement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leadership responsibilities are shared more widely to improve the school further
- all leaders and governors can show the impact of their work on children's achievement
- information about children's progress is used to make incisive changes to provision.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Dulon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the special educational needs coordinator, four governors and a representative of the local authority. I visited the classroom, and outside and soft play areas jointly with you, to see the children learning. Together, we considered how well you had addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, how effective extra support for disadvantaged children and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is, how well leaders have ensured that children, including the most able, make good progress and how the children's centre supports your work to keep children safe. I took into account responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as speaking to a number of parents at the start of the school day. I evaluated a range of documents, including children's progress information.