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Mrs C Smith  
Headteacher  
Hetton-le-Hole Nursery School  
Victoria Street  
Hetton-le-Hole  
Houghton-le-Spring  
Tyne and Wear  
DH5 9DG

Dear Mrs Smith

### **Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: early learning**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and children, during my visit on 2 December 2010 to evaluate the provision and outcomes for children in communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with you; scrutiny of relevant documentation, including the school's own assessments of children's learning; and observation of sessions in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The effectiveness of meeting the children's communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional learning and development needs is good.

### **Achievement**

- Children make good progress from their individual starting points, which are broadly typical of children of their age. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make at least good and sometimes outstanding progress because their needs are identified early and because of the high-quality support that they receive.

- Attainment has risen gradually over the last three years with particular strengths in children's dispositions and attitudes, and their language for communication and thinking. Children have very positive attitudes to learning and many benefit from attending the childcare provision, often from a young age. In 2010, children left the Nursery with skills and abilities above those typical of their age in all areas of personal, social and emotional development and in three strands of communication, language and literacy. They were in line with expectations for their age in writing. Consequently, this year, children have been involved in a writing project to promote their skills further in this area.
- Children settle quickly and enjoy very good relationships with adults. Their behaviour is very good. They are motivated and keen to engage in all the activities provided for them and in those that they choose for themselves. They are rapidly becoming independent learners and can give reasons for their choice of activity. They show care and consideration towards one another, as shown by one child pulling another child around the outdoor area on a sledge in the snow, and in the way in which they take turns and share equipment. Children develop their confidence and self-esteem and are very happy within the setting.

### **Quality of provision**

- The strengths of the provision lie in the effective systems in place to provide high levels of care for children which promote their learning and personal development well. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities and staff take every opportunity to promote children's communication, language and literacy and their personal, social and emotional skills effectively. This was demonstrated well through a music session when children were requested to listen carefully to a series of sounds made on a variety of items, to describe what they heard and also identify the material that the item was made from, such as metal or wood. They responded very well to this opportunity to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- Staff take into account children's needs and interests in their planning and they know the children well. However, although planning identifies key skills, it does not always identify what children have achieved and what their 'next steps' in learning should be.
- The learning environment is bright and stimulating and there is a wide range of interesting resources which are accessible to children. This helps to promote their independence in learning. However, there are only limited resources available that are made from natural materials and 'real' objects. There is a good focus on outdoor learning to extend opportunities for role play and to use the wider environment. Children particularly enjoyed playing in the snow, pulling each other on sledges and squirting different coloured dyes on the snow to create patterns which promoted much valuable discussion and sharing of equipment.

- Sensitive support is given to children who are vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to enable them to participate fully in all the activities on offer and this is the reason why they make such good progress. The school has participated in a 'play therapy' project along with several other schools and this has been particularly beneficial in promoting children's personal, social and emotional development.

### **Leadership and management**

- You provide strong leadership and are committed to ensuring that children make as much progress as they can. Self-evaluation is accurate and you have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the Nursery. Strategic planning is effective and identifies appropriate priorities within the school. You endeavour to ensure that there is consistency for children across the care and education provision in order to best meet the needs of the children and to ensure a seamless progression for children throughout the school. Staff work effectively as a team for the benefit of the children.
- There are effective partnerships with parents and carers, who are consulted about ways in which they would like to be involved in helping their children, for example, through family learning opportunities. There are good links with external agencies and these are particularly effective when the school takes steps to support vulnerable children and their families.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:**

- identifying in planning what individual children have achieved, particularly those who require additional challenge or support, in order to identify more precisely what their 'next steps' in learning are
- improving the quality of learning resources by introducing more natural and real resources in order to promote first-hand experiences.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop the Early Years Foundation Stage in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Christine Inkster**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**