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Mrs C Young
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Young

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 1 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, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader/deputy headteacher; scrutiny of relevant documentation, including 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 achieve well in communication, language and literacy and in their personal, social and emotional development. They enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are well below those typical for their age. Children make good progress from their starting points, although they still leave the Reception classes below the expected level for their age. Children with

special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language also make good progress because of the good quality support they receive.

- Attainment has risen year-on-year since 2008. Children's attainment in their personal, social and emotional development is highest in their dispositions and attitudes, but the greatest improvement is in emotional development. This is because staff leaders have taken steps to ensure that all children new to the school settle in quickly and they have established a nurture group to address the emotional needs of individual children. Children's use of language for communication and thinking is the strongest area in their communication, language and literacy development, but the highest increase in attainment is in reading. This is because the school has taken positive steps to address this area, such as providing workshops for parents on how they can help their child to read and because of daily phonic sessions.
- Staff identified that boys had not achieved as well as girls in most areas of learning, but particularly in writing. Consequently, they took positive steps to address this by improving the range of activities that appeal to boys, such as a project on 'superheroes'. This had a positive effect and the rate of progress made by boys is increasing rapidly, particularly in writing.
- Children settle quickly and enjoy very good relationships with adults. They behave very well and show care and consideration towards one another, sharing equipment and taking turns in games. They show great interest in the activities on offer to them and rapidly become independent learners. They enjoy participating in a wide range of stimulating activities and through well-targeted adult support become more confident and develop their self-esteem.

Quality of provision

- The strengths of the provision lie in the effective systems in place to identify children's learning and personal development needs on entry to the Nursery, and in the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of their progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Day-to-day observations and assessments are carried out effectively to identify children's achievements. Adults plan their 'next steps' in learning, often based on their individual needs and interests. Staff know the children very well and keep a close eye on any children who may have particular needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. They work closely with other agencies that are based on the same site and use a variety of intervention strategies to address children's particular needs, such as through the nurture group or bilingual support.
- Staff work hard to promote children's speaking and listening skills across all areas of learning. They have introduced strategies such as 'Every Child a Talker' and 'Talk, Talk' bags which children can take home and share

with their parents. However, staff do not always promote children's language skills as effectively as they could because children are not always encouraged to answer questions more fully and give reasons for their answers.

- 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, the learning environment does not fully reflect children's backgrounds or cultural diversity. There is a strongly planned focus for outdoor learning to extend opportunities for role play and to use the wider environment to promote learning.
- The school works closely with the Early Days Nursery which is a childcare provision on the same site. This helps to develop links with parents and has an impact on children's early development. Staff meet and discuss children's needs on a daily basis and the staff in the Early Days Nursery provide specific support with transition into the school Nursery.

Leadership and management

- You and the deputy headteacher draw very well on your knowledge of, and expertise in, the Early Years Foundation Stage and are committed to providing high-quality education and care for the children. Self-evaluation is accurate and senior leaders have a very good understanding of the strengths and areas to be improved. There is a clear focus on raising achievement and in ensuring that all children achieve equally well, regardless of background. Staff work closely together as a team and share their strengths and good practice.
- Partnerships with other agencies are very effective in meeting children's individual needs. Staff regularly communicate with the range of professionals based on the same site to ensure that children and their families receive the support that they need. Partnerships with parents are effective overall, but despite the best efforts of the school some parents are reluctant to engage.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing staff's expertise in promoting children's language development, particularly by encouraging children to answer more fully and give reasons for their answers
- improving the learning environment to reflect children's backgrounds to help all children in the setting develop a greater understanding of cultural diversity.

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