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Mrs Shields
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Shields

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 14 October 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 staff; 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 developments needs is outstanding.

Achievement

- From a very low starting point, children make excellent progress in communication, language and literacy. In this area of learning their attainment, at the end of the Reception year, is usually around the national average.
- When they join the Nursery, around half of the children do not speak English. These children acquire communication skills in English particularly rapidly.

- Many of the children face difficulties in their lives which affect aspects of their personal, social and emotional development. Nonetheless, attainment in this area of learning is usually close to, or above, the national average. This represents outstanding achievement.
- Children thoroughly enjoy learning through the wide range of very well-considered activities that are on offer in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit. For example, a small group in Reception greatly enjoyed looking at a book with the teacher and talking about the story. In Nursery, children listened very carefully to items from the 'box of sounds'.
- Staff establish a calm atmosphere for learning which helps children to sustain concentration and persist with tasks.
- Children develop personal skills in response to the staff's sensitive example and praise for independence and responsibility. For instance, on the day of the visit, the 'star of the day' award in Nursery was given to a child who came in sensibly, found her name independently and immediately began a self-selected activity.

Quality of provision

- The teaching is predominantly outstanding, though some is good. Staff have a very good understanding of how young children develop and learn. They have excellent relationships with the children.
- Staff teamwork is strong. The team works closely together to plan learning activities that are thought through carefully, capture the children's interest and provide opportunities to extend children's vocabulary, and develop their ability to communicate and articulate their ideas. They create an unhurried atmosphere and judge astutely when to join in children's activities to develop their interests and move their learning on.
- Staff note the development in each child's learning and use these assessments well to plan future activities. Nonetheless, occasionally, adult-led activities with large groups of children are not well-tailored to the full range of ability. This means that, while most children are learning, some have little chance to contribute and, for the more able, there is little challenge.

Leadership and management

- Staff at all levels have the highest aspirations for the children. They are committed to providing high-quality education and care and they are always looking for ways to improve further. To this end they undertake a good amount of carefully selected additional training.
- The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage maintains a good overview of the provision, keeps track of the children's attainment and plans well for future developments. However, more could be done to use analysis of children's rates of progress to determine where adjustments to the

curriculum might be useful, and to evaluate the effectiveness of different aspects of the school's work in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- The school has strong, positive relationships with the children's parents and carers and with external agencies. These contribute to the children's achievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- further refining the use of assessment data to:
 - keep a close check on each child's rate of progress in all strands of communication, language and literacy and in their personal, social and emotional development
 - inform adjustments to the curriculum and methods of teaching
- ensuring that the more able children are sufficiently challenged when they are taught within a large group of children.

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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Pat Kime
Her Majesty's Inspector