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23 October 2014

Janet Brownjohn  
Headteacher  
Rothesay Nursery School  
59 Rothesay Road  
Luton  
LU1 1RB

Dear Mrs Brownjohn

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rothesay Nursery School**

Following my visit to your school on 22 October 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- Fix milestones in the action plan at key review points linked to the criteria set for success so that progress can be measured.
- Ensure that plans to improve leadership and provision for disabled children and those with special educational needs takes into account the expectations and requirements of the new Code of Practice issued by the Department for Education.
- Compare Rothesay children's achievements at the end of last term to local and national figures to show that the gaps are narrowing.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated and the single central register (a spreadsheet showing all of the necessary checks for the recruitment of staff) was examined. I visited all areas of the nursery and observed some adult-led literacy groups. We discussed previous and current information about children's achievement and your evaluation of the nursery's effectiveness.

## **Context**

One new permanent, full-time teacher has joined the school since the previous inspection. The former three classes are now arranged as two. All staff have been allocated curriculum roles and responsibilities for which they are accountable.

## **Main findings**

The action plan is fit for purpose. It is aligned to the areas for improvement outlined in the recent section 5 inspection report and linked to challenging targets for good teaching and high expectations to raise children's achievement. Responsibility for leading each action is distributed across a range of staff so that the plan is manageable. Deadlines have been set for actions to be completed and these are sensibly spread at intervals throughout the school year to avoid overload. It will be important to specify milestones along the way to check the progress made against each action.

You have provided the necessary structure for the improvement process and have made clear your expectations. Accountability at all levels is stronger and you are giving staff the opportunity to lead on specific areas and share good practice. They are blossoming under this approach and pleased to influence others with growing confidence. Motivated staff are finding their work rewarding and, importantly, happy children are enjoying learning. The professional dialogue around the building is focused on how well children are learning and celebrating their achievements. While, in the short term, there is evidence of suitable systems in place to support disabled children and those with special educational needs, further work is required to plan for the future. It is necessary that the expectations and requirements for leadership of special needs meet those outlined in the new Code of Practice. With support from governors you are managing staff performance rigorously with suitable mentoring, training and coaching, coupled with clear targets for improvement to aim for.

Inviting activities for learning are arranged in attractive spaces. The whole-school focus on literacy is easy to spot across the nursery with good quality displays of children's work linked to key vocabulary; opportunities inside and outdoors to develop early reading and writing skills; and adult-led sessions in the morning and

afternoon focussing on letters and the sounds they make (phonics). By the end of the summer term, children's attainment in communication, language, literacy and numeracy compared to the previous year was significantly higher. You are determined that this success will continue, ensuring that tried and tested approaches that are leading to better outcomes are sustained. The data has not yet been compared to Luton and national scores so that you are in a position to demonstrate that the gap is narrowing.

Governors are well informed about the nursery's progress through regular visits and information that you and the deputy headteacher provide about teaching and children's achievement. They share your ambition to achieve a good grade for overall effectiveness at the next inspection. Governors ensure that they provide the necessary challenge to set targets that are suitably high for staff to aspire to. Requirements for the safe recruitment and vetting of staff are met, and governors are checking to see how well children are taking responsibility for their own personal safety as they play.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

You lead half-termly project group meetings where you meet with professionals from beyond the school to share evidence and discuss improvements. This helps you to make accurate judgements about the nursery's effectiveness. The local authority keeps in regular touch with the school's progress through half-termly meetings of the project group and bi-monthly school improvement adviser visits. It is investing in coaching, led by local authority advisers, for staff who show the potential to move their practice from good to outstanding. You have signed up for a government-funded project, run jointly between the National Children's Bureau and the local authority, to raise early achievement in literacy. Staff at all levels benefit from a strong and well-established link with Hillborough Infant school led by a local leader in education, where they are able to watch and learn from high-quality leaders and teachers in action.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Luton.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**