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Mrs Julie Coackley
Head of School
Chelsea Open Air Nursery School
51 Glebe Place
Chelsea
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Dear Mrs Coackley

Short inspection of Chelsea Open Air Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 10 November 2015, 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 outstanding in October 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have made sure that the outstanding provision and highest outcomes have been maintained, and made good progress in tackling the area for improvement identified in the inspection report. All leaders and key members of staff use a system to track individual children's achievement in all areas of learning. You identify any potential underachievement and quickly put in place targeted and tailored early interventions to make sure that each child achieves their full potential. Nonetheless, although you check and compare the progress made by some groups of learners, including those children who speak English as an additional language, more-able children and those with learning difficulties, you do not systematically check the progress made by all groups of learners, notably boys and girls.

Despite a recent review following the decommissioning of the children's centre, with the resultant impending changes to the senior leadership of the school, you and all other leaders, including governors, remain resolute in sustaining excellence for all. You have secured further improvements, particularly in the provision for the most vulnerable children, including those children who find learning difficult. You have used additional local authority special needs funding to enhance their learning, behaviour and welfare. These children receive full-time provision. You have deployed two special needs support adults to work intensively with disabled children and those

who have special educational needs on a one-to-one basis. A community lead practitioner works alongside other external professionals with children identified as having specific learning difficulties, such as speech and language delay. These children make small but vital steps in their learning and development, especially in their language and communication skills. In September 2014, you extended the provision to accommodate two-year-old children (starting after their third birthday). You are very clear that this is a positive step because these children will attend the nursery for two years and have the highest-quality experience of learning and care.

The school shares its outstanding practice with other schools, who regularly visit, because it has been recognised as a centre of excellence by the local authority for many years. Inclusion is at the heart of your work. This is recognised by the local authority. They have targeted further enhanced special needs funding, so that in partnership with another outstanding Nursery provider, excellent practice can be shared across the borough. Nevertheless, the local authority has yet to delegate the early years pupil premium funding to the school.

Your quiet determination to continue to improve is shared by all and there is clearly no room for complacency. You have secured a culture of openness and honesty, where all professionals reflect on the impact of their work. The welcoming ethos of the school results in exceptionally strong partnerships with parents. You successfully engage with parents from a diverse range of backgrounds. Leaders, including the governors, systematically gather parents' views. These surveys always reflect high levels of parental satisfaction. Parents told me that they greatly appreciate the excellent education their child receives. In our tour of the school, you outlined the guidance and support the school provides for parents in helping their child to learn through the various parent partnership activities. There are numerous workshops and home-loan resources, including dual reading books in both English and the child's home language. Parents have absolute confidence that their child is kept safe and that their well-being is paramount. Adults' attention to individual children's needs and welfare is exemplary. This provides a secure foundation for the children to thrive and blossom.

Safeguarding is effective.

Everyone accepts their responsibility to ensure the safeguarding of children. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed. There are clear guidelines which are understood and adhered to by all. This includes effective e-safety practice, including the use of mobile phones and cameras, as well as keeping children safe when using the internet. Training in child protection is up to date and, as a result, all adults know how to recognise warning signs and how to keep children safe. All recruitment and vetting checks are thoroughly undertaken to secure the safety of children.

Full use is made of external agencies. You seek advice when any concerns are raised about children. This enables you to secure the right level of support, intervention

and expertise for both children and families. Governors ensure that they meet their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding.

Inspection findings

- As senior leaders, you monitor the work of the school rigorously and regularly. Your self-evaluation is accurate and identifies strengths and areas for improvement precisely, including the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You have rightly identified further work to be done to improve information and communication technology (ICT). Staff told me that they appreciate their professional training. Both you and your deputy provide clear and effective feedback to staff following paired observations. This is securing even more improvements in provision.
- Governors know how well the school is performing. They check the progress leaders are making in relation to the school priorities. They are challenging the school's leadership to a greater extent. Progress is monitored by the governors' achievement committee each half term. However, governors do not have a comprehensive overview of the progress made by all the different groups. This prevents them from asking really probing questions to hold leaders fully to account for their work.
- Provision is highly effective in meeting the individual needs, abilities and interests of all children. Staff have an accurate picture of children's starting points and current levels of skills, understanding and knowledge. They meticulously observe and assess children's learning and progress. A profile of the children's achievement is recorded, as well as the next steps in learning. Activities, additional support and interventions are carefully planned to make sure that all children, irrespective of ability, gender and background, make rapid progress. This includes the more-able children. These children are taught literacy skills beyond what is typically expected for their age, including blending the sounds letters make (phonics), to read simple texts in their 'Purple Story' groups.
- Leaders have rightly pinpointed that boys' skills in writing are generally lower compared to the girls when they enter the Nursery. Activities now promote mark-making at every opportunity. Nonetheless, although you have successfully closed the gap between boys and girls in their personal, physical and mathematical development by the end of the Nursery Year, the gap remains in literacy.
- Learning areas are highly organised and encourage children to experiment, investigate and think creatively on their own and with each other. The outdoor learning area is a labyrinth of exciting places for children to learn and play, whatever the weather.
- Adults work remarkably well together. They have an in-depth understanding of what constitutes outstanding early years provision. There is a seamless balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, based on the children's fascinations. Adults gauge precisely when to intervene in the children's play,

in order to develop and extend their communication and thinking skills. Their searching questions secure full concentration and deep thinking.

- Children form very close bonds with all staff, and especially with their key workers. This enables them to quickly settle into their new school. Children display high levels of confidence, cooperation and emotional resilience. They are exceptionally well prepared for the Reception Year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- progress information is used to compare the progress and skill levels of all groups, including boys and girls, so that the gap is closed between these two groups in literacy
- this information is used by leaders and governors to hold all fully to account for their work.

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, and a local authority representative. I observed children as they learned and played in classrooms and outdoors. I reviewed the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation, the checks for safeguarding children and records of children's progress.