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14 December 2015

Sarah Carlyle  
Headteacher  
Windham Nursery School  
Windham Road  
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Dear Ms Carlyle

### **Short inspection of Windham Nursery**

Following my visit to the school on 25 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 Windham Nursery School was judged to be outstanding in October 2012.

### **This school continues to be outstanding.**

Since 2007, Windham Nursery has been judged on three consecutive inspections by Ofsted as providing an outstanding quality of education. I am delighted to report that this accolade has been sustained for a fourth time.

The nursery is highly regarded in the local community. Parents told me about what makes Windham Nursery such a special place. They recount many meaningful experiences that are currently provided for their children. Parents also say that this standard has been sustained, in some cases since their brothers and sisters attended, who are now old enough to be at secondary school. Parents also comment warmly about the strong support they receive as first-time parents, but exceptionally so if their children have special educational needs or attend 'Jigsaw', the resource provision for children with social and communication needs.

Staff are very experienced and they know how to get the best out of every child. They work together as a cohesive team. They establish strong partnerships with families and they show a genuine commitment to promote the well-being of all children. Staff are not complacent and they embrace the changes you bring to the nursery since your appointment as headteacher in September 2014. You work skilfully with adults and parents to involve them in any changes. The nursery now works more closely with wider services on the shared site, to strengthen practice which benefits the diverse needs of children and their families associated with Windham Nursery.

All children make at least good and mostly outstanding progress from their own starting points. Most children attend the nursery for one year only and as such each cohort is different. Together with your staff team, you ensure that the nursery provides bespoke experiences to nurture and advance every child's unique skills and talents.

Children settle remarkably quickly into the nursery because they feel safe and secure. Adults skilfully guide and encourage children to take responsibility for their learning. The indoor and outside environments are expertly organised with many accessible resources from which children select during their exploratory play. Children attending 'Jigsaw' receive equally skilled teaching and learning experiences which promotes their communication skills and engagement with others. Adults deploy appropriate routines and techniques to help children to remain focused and calm.

The nursery has well established and equally highly regarded additional services for under-three-year olds. These services help equip parents and children with the necessary skills to be confident and ready for school. One parent commented, 'the transition to school was such a smooth one which I really believe was because my children were so well prepared by Windham.' Staff lead pre-school programmes and workshops to model effective early reading and play experiences for parents to try with their children: 'Little Learners' for parents and pre-nursery-aged children and 'Crawlers and Explorers' for toddlers. Parents speak very highly about the usefulness of these sessions.

Governors and leaders considered carefully how to enhance these opportunities. In September, in consultation with the local authority and the nursery's wider networks, two-year old provision has been successfully introduced.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements are robust and kept continually under review by leaders and governors.

Safeguarding checks on staff suitability to work with children are tightly managed. During staff recruitment interviews candidates answer questions to assess their commitment and understanding of how to keep children safe. During employment in the nursery staff complete additional checks about their ongoing suitability to work with children in accordance with the required guidance.

The nursery works closely with external agencies to provide strong support for all families, but especially for those who have children with additional needs. You ensure that support is effectively and sensitively co-ordinated using the wide range of specialist services linked to the nursery.

Staff and governors are well informed about changes in the statutory guidance, *Keeping children safe in education*. For example, in October 2015 you agreed an

anti-radicalisation policy with staff and governors to ensure their continued vigilance about current safeguarding matters.

On a more practical level mobile phones are not used anywhere on the premises by staff, parents or visitors. This expectation is non-negotiable and provides an additional measure to ensure children's safety. The nursery shares the site with a range of different professional services. Throughout the site all staff are attentive and watchful. They will confidently approach visitors to seek identification or guide them to the reception area to sign in.

## **Inspection findings**

- You have ensured that the vision, 'Happy Children, Happy People', is embedded into routines and expectations throughout the nursery.
- You have worked competently alongside staff to introduce different approaches to teaching and learning. You believe children can take greater responsibility to choose how to pursue and develop their own interests. This requires practitioners with expert knowledge about how young children learn. Staff already possess highly proficient skills and experience. They acknowledge that their practice has become more refined and that children's attitudes are more autonomous because of this initiative. In group discussion, one member of staff said, 'this is an exciting place to work; always changing and evolving, which spurs us on to be even better!' Other staff agreed wholeheartedly with this sentiment.
- Staff are keenly aware of children's individual capabilities because of the skilful way they observe, guide and interact with children. This wealth of assessment information contributes to comprehensive records that track children's academic and personal achievement. Children who are not doing as well as they should are quickly identified. Senior leaders work closely in their teams to quickly address any dips in children's achievement or in identified curriculum areas.
- You and I agreed that some ways of checking the school's work lack precision and consequently feedback can be too generalised, thereby reducing its impact on developing key priorities more sharply.
- In careful consultation with staff you introduced an online assessment system which shares photographs, assessments and evidence about children's performance and skills with parents using a secure portal. This system is brand new. Staff, governors and especially parents are confident that this will further enhance the strong partnerships that already exist between home and school.
- I scrutinised children's assessment information with you. My analysis confirms your evaluation that children make significant progress from their individual starting points. Last year, for example, 38% of the whole cohort made rapid progress between joining and leaving the nursery. The

nursery prioritises developing rich experiences to promote children's communication and language skills. It is not surprising, therefore, that 54% of all children exceeded typical rates of progress in reading.

- The nursery's values are 'inclusive, inspiring, innovative.' It is renowned for its inclusivity. Adults expertly meet the needs of disabled children or those who have additional needs. Children in the 'Jigsaw' provision make equally good and outstanding progress when compared with other children. During my visit children were sensitively guided by adults to sign for drinks and snacks, they explored light, sound and rhythm enthusiastically turn-taking in the sensory room. Most significantly they were respectfully included and accepted by other children, discreetly supported by adults in the main indoor and outside areas.
- It is clear already that the new two-year old provision replicates the very strong established practice for older children; within half a term two-year-old children are beginning to develop confidence and curiosity which is the hallmark of the nursery's provision. Girls and boys build on their visits to the local area by choosing role play with cars, traffic lights and road maps to recall their real-life experiences. They understand the nursery routines, sit quietly to eat fruit and play and explore well alongside one another.
- Children's attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They learn together side by side exceptionally well. During my visit I observed wonderful moments of sustained learning, a sample exemplified by the following: a child driving a large handmade cardboard box-inspired bus, children building walls with real bricks, others exploring mark making with chalk on most surfaces in the outdoor area while others chose to listen quietly inside to familiar stories and tales.
- The governing body are experienced and they take their responsibilities seriously. They have a secure understanding of the nursery's strengths and areas for development because they seek strong evidence about how effectively it works. Because governors understand the nursery's context very well they knew what needed to be done and recognised your skills to take the school forward to the next phase in its development.
- The school improvement plan is for one year. This short-term view does not consider well enough opportunities to enhance the nursery or to assess the impact of current initiatives over time.
- Additionally, leaders' and governors' checks of the school's work are, at times, too general to provide precise feedback about its effectiveness. At my final meeting with you and your governors we agreed that this was a most appropriate next step for the nursery.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the school strategic plan considers longer-term objectives
- strategies to check overall effectiveness are more precise to ensure excellence is sustained in children's well-being and achievement.

Yours sincerely

Ann Debono

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, representatives of the local authority, parents and members of the governing body. The inspector jointly observed teaching and learning with the headteacher. Together, they visited all classrooms to observe the provision for three-year-olds, two-year-olds and the specialist resource base for children with additional language and communication needs. The inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation, including evidence of children's work, performance information, governors' records of their meetings and safeguarding information. The school action plan and self-evaluation documents were also evaluated.