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Ms Debbie Carter
Headteacher
Horsham Nursery School Children and Family Centre
Harwood Road
Horsham
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Dear Ms Carter

Short inspection of Horsham Nursery School Children and Family Centre

Following my visit to the school on 8 December 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 good in April 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your thoughtful leadership the nursery continues to provide a caring, stimulating environment where children make good progress towards readiness for primary school. All staff share your vision for the best care and early education, whether children join you from the centre's provision for younger children, from other settings or from home. You pay close attention to children's and families' particular needs, including through home visits. This approach ensures a successful start for children at the nursery and continuing good communication between home and school. Parents are rightly confident that children are safe and happy in the care of your staff. A number of parents told me how pleased they are that good foundations laid at the nursery supported their older children's success in Reception Year. You clearly aim for continuous improvement. You ensure teachers constantly review and develop the children's experiences in all areas of learning, regularly refreshing the nursery inside and outside. Recent major development of the outdoor area provides a safe, rich space which supports the children's development well.

At the time of the last inspection, the inspector recognised the many strengths of the school. These included your strong leadership, the inclusive and harmonious community, children's good achievement and behaviour, the quality of teaching and excellent partnerships with parents and carers. At the same time the inspector identified that staff needed to intervene more consistently to support children

requiring extra help to learn well. The inspector noted staff should improve their use of information about children's progress, to plan activities to move children's learning on. The inspector also asked your staff to make consistently good use of questions to challenge children's thinking. You have addressed these recommendations effectively. Staff are well informed about each child's progress, including individual areas of strength and where extra help may be needed. As a result, adults readily step in to support children's learning, using questions effectively to check and then extend children's understanding. When staff plan, they consider carefully children's progress so far, setting out key questions and vocabulary for adults to use during activities.

You and governors are not complacent. You have identified the correct priorities for further improvement and are pursuing the right actions. You are supporting staff to describe what they want children to learn even more clearly in their planning. You recognise that when leaders observe learning they should review children's achievement more closely, as well as the quality of the provision. We agreed that adults' comments in children's special folders, where examples of children's activities and work are compiled, should also focus more precisely on children's progress. You and governors recognise the importance of assuring the quality of information brought to governors about children's achievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

The nursery is a very safe place, where children feel safe because of the care and kindness of all the adults. The school's setting within the Children and Family Centre ensures rigorous policies and procedures, and effective sharing of information. The premises are secure, and maintained to a very high standard. Equipment and resources are of a high quality and appropriate for the children's ages. A good number of staff are trained well in safeguarding and first aid; appropriate risk assessments are completed. Staff recruitment and training are overseen scrupulously. Careful monitoring of children's attendance and behaviour supports you well to discuss any concerns with parents, and when making referrals to external agencies.

Inspection findings

- Parents and staff are confident in your well-established leadership. Your overall management of the centre ensures a consistent approach to children's care and development, from their earliest months. You lead with a clear vision, promoting the importance of teamwork, good communication with families and prompt support when needed. The centre's calm and friendly atmosphere is led by your example of care and attention to everyone's needs, and your clear expectation that all staff and families will show respect and consideration for others.
- Parents and staff are pleased that you are readily available and a considerate leader. All parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to others. Parents value highly

the welcome they receive and the daily opportunities to speak with their child's key worker.

- You ensure all teachers provide leadership in different aspects of the provision. These expectations are firmly linked to the school's improvement plan and teachers' performance management. Your recent introduction of teachers reporting directly to governors is helping to focus staff on their role in continuous improvement.
- The opportunities adults create for the children, inside and outside, reflect all the expected areas of early learning well. Activities are well organised and closely monitored, so there is consistency in children's experiences. Activities inside and out of doors are equally rich and well supported.
- All the adults work well as a team, sharing a strong commitment and communicating efficiently, to support the best care and progress for each child. Roles and responsibilities are clear and each adult works reliably to fulfil their part. Key workers know their children well. Positive relationships mean children are happy to engage with any of the adults. Adults model good spoken English and listening, encouraging and challenging the children well to develop their communication skills.
- Recent developments in mathematics reflect the way teachers continually develop the provision. More natural items have been introduced into sorting and counting activities, to stimulate children's senses and promote their curiosity about the natural world.
- You have introduced an effective system for teachers to track and record children's progress, referring to national documents. Teachers in the nursery regularly discuss their assessments to ensure consistency, but do not have the opportunity to compare their judgements with colleagues in other schools.
- Evidence of individual children's learning over time is now compiled in special folders. Staff record helpful comments explaining the activity shown, for example in a photograph or through a piece of work. However, these comments usually describe the activity without commenting clearly on the progress achieved. Parents value the regular reports they receive about their child's progress and next steps, including the opportunity to add their own comments.
- Adults' plans for children's learning in the long, medium and short term set out well the themes and activities children will explore. Activity plans include increasing detail, including guidance for adults about key questions and vocabulary to be used. Nevertheless, plans are not exactly clear about the learning intended, to help staff support activities well and gauge children's success accurately.
- You check the quality of provision and teaching regularly, providing helpful feedback to staff while ensuring you are fair and consistent. Checks on teaching, however, do not always evaluate clearly the impact of the provision on children's progress.

- Linking well with your checks on teaching, you provide relevant support and training to staff to promote their professional development. Staff valued visits last year to other early years settings, finding these a rich source of new ideas. The current development focus, with an experienced storyteller visiting the nursery, is clearly helping to develop staff skills. During my visit I observed adults actively sharing the Christmas story with different children, including through role play, art, music and books. As a result, children were successfully engaged in the story, thinking about its meaning for the different characters while having fun.
- Children behave well because they are motivated by the quality and range of activities and resources provided. Good supervision and close attention to the needs of individuals help to pre-empt any social difficulties. Staff are quick to step in if problems arise, sensitively supporting upset children, while helping others to manage their feelings more appropriately and to make amends. Children are taught to understand others' feelings, and parents kept well informed about any incidents.
- You monitor each child's attendance and welfare closely, making prompt contact with parents and carers if concerns arise. Wide-ranging support is available for families through the centre's services. You make timely referrals to outside agencies when necessary. Sensibly, you are considering how to support parents and carers in keeping their children safe online. You are also alert to the importance of the centre's work in helping all families to feel fully part of British society. You ensure celebrations and activities reflect a wide range of cultures and traditions, preparing children well for life in modern Britain.
- Children make good progress from their different starting points, often well supported by their earlier time in the centre's provision for under-threes. This includes children supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for those who would be entitled to free school meals, or looked after), those needing extra support to learn well and those who speak English as an additional language.
- Staff are prompt to identify any possible barriers to a child's successful progress and seek appropriate support, for example through speech and language therapy.
- The most-able children make good progress over time, although you rightly recognise the need to ensure suitable resources are readily available at all times, to keep these children purposefully engaged.
- Knowledgeable and experienced governors openly welcome the fresh views of new members. Governors robustly debate important decisions, although this is not always well reported in records of meetings. Governors support you well by asking relevant questions when scrutinising your reports about the welfare and progress of the children, and the development of staff. Sensibly, governors validate your reports through the advice of an external consultant. Governors conscientiously

oversee the safety and security of the nursery, but have not ensured that all updated policies are promptly available on the school's website.

- You have made good use of local authority advice to update safeguarding policies to meet recent changes in requirements. Governors value highly the training provided for them by the local authority.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers and leaders focus more precisely on children's learning when planning, commenting in children's special folders, and evaluating provision
- staff have regular opportunities to discuss assessment with colleagues in other schools
- the school's website meets all requirements for the publication of policies.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sian Thornton

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also met with governors and a representative of the local authority. I spoke with parents bringing their children to the nursery, considered 14 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View, and 35 given to the school's recent parents' survey. I met with members of staff and took account of four responses to Ofsted's staff survey. Together we visited both nursery sessions, when we observed teaching and learning and looked at teachers' planning. I examined a range of documents, including: your evaluations of teaching and the school's overall effectiveness; the school's improvement plans; information about children's achievement, attendance, behaviour and welfare; policies and procedures relating to special educational needs, safeguarding, and health and safety; governing body records; and reports from the local authority and an external consultant.