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Miss Nicola McDonagh  
Headteacher  
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Moorgate  
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Dear Miss McDonagh

### **Short inspection of Moorgate Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 30 June 2016, 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 February 2013. Since the last inspection the headteacher has left the school. You took up the post of headteacher in September 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained and developed the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, staff and governors have high expectations of what children at Moorgate can achieve. While respecting the school's long history of providing outstanding teaching and learning, you have worked skilfully to bring additional challenge to the work of staff. You have worked very well to limit the impact of unavoidable staff absences during this past year. You are drawing steadily upon the individual strengths of staff to develop and lead aspects of the curriculum. As a result, children continue to thrive and the school continues to improve. The high standard of teaching and learning that I reported at the previous inspection has been maintained. At the same time, the school is developing new, additional strengths such as in the tracking of children's progress.

Children are benefiting from a broad range of experiences ranging from regular trips to a local 'forest', to hearing stories in other languages, to exciting opportunities to dress up and celebrate festivals with staff. Children are making excellent progress in their readiness for primary school and parents are thrilled with the quality of their children's learning. You and governors are working actively to show that this outstanding school remains open while the on-site children's centre is to cease operating. Together with

governors, you have set out a very clear and ambitious vision for the future direction of the school. Staff are excited by the opportunities that lie ahead.

At the previous inspection I recommended that governors develop their understanding of arrangements for setting staff targets and reviewing pay in the school. Governors now hold a very clear understanding of the link between staff performance and pay. They take seriously their responsibility to ensure staff can develop their future careers through working at Moorgate. Since taking up your post, you have ensured that governors are kept fully informed of your work to support all staff in the school.

I reported previously that staff place a key emphasis upon children becoming confident, feeling good about themselves and being able to communicate, be active and relate well to others. This remains a strength of the school. Staff value what children say and do in their play and class activities. I commended the school for the high-quality relationships that staff develop with individual groups of children. This continues to be the case; children highly value their regular time with their key member of staff.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are thorough and of high quality. You have established clear rules for the use of mobile phones, cameras and the internet in the school. Much attention has been given to making sure staff understand current national issues about child protection and how this relates to their work with young children. Consequently, staff hold a clear understanding of the different types of risks faced by children and families. Staff know how to identify possible warning signs and how to report their concerns. Leaders act quickly when issues are brought to their attention. The governing body keeps a careful overview of the care and protection of children, staff and families at the school. Staff act as excellent role models for children in how to stay safe and how to behave towards one another.

### **Inspection findings**

- Staff and governors value the way you use your deep understanding of teaching in the early years to improve their work. You draw upon your detailed knowledge of research in early years education to give fresh challenge to the outstanding work of the school. Since taking up the post of headteacher at Moorgate you have invested time getting to know the individual strengths and passions of your staff. You have gained a very clear understanding of the quality of teaching and children's progress. You have encouraged, developed and supported the team very well. You and the senior teacher are acting as excellent role models for staff through your teaching in the classroom. You expect no less of staff than you do of yourself. You welcome feedback about how your own teaching can improve. All staff and leaders in the school are encouraged to see themselves as learners.

- Staff told me they value the training they are accessing. For example, recent professional development about improving the classroom environment has challenged their thinking and created calm, purposeful and well-used learning spaces throughout the school. Children love their revitalised learning areas and their behaviour at school is impeccable.
- Because of improvements in teaching, the learning of the most able children is being challenged well by staff. Maximum use is being made of opportunities to extend children's thinking in their play. For example, during the inspection you and I observed some most-able children constructing a large plastic structure outdoors. The careful, patient use of language by the teaching assistant strengthened children's learning well. She pitched her questions at just the right level to stretch children's skills of cooperation, design, construction and analysis. Careful assessment by staff is spotting these children quickly and leading to ambitious, individual targets for children.
- Improvements in staff knowledge, together with their raised expectations of what children can achieve, has led to the much-improved teaching of phonics. Children experience many activities to develop their ability to hear and identify sounds, as well as sing rhymes and songs. Those who are most able are now being taught the sounds that letters make (phonics). This teaching is rapidly enhancing children's progress. Children are confident to attempt saying the sounds of the letters they see. They want to read. Parents are thrilled with their children's increased skills and enthusiasm for books and reading.
- The very best teaching in the school remains highly inspiring and engaging and matched with high expectations. For example, children studied a beautifully-illustrated story book with the teacher. All of the text was in Spanish – which she could read to them and translate with accuracy. Although aimed at older children, she explained some of the words and scary illustrations so carefully that children keenly requested more. They wanted to revisit the book, to see and discuss the text and illustrations further. Such thrilling teaching is giving children authentic respect for different people and languages as well as a brilliant head start to their literacy learning while at nursery school. The next step for the school is to make sure that even more teaching is equally as inspiring.
- Governors have a very clear and well-informed understanding of the school, including children's progress, school finance, the future vision and risks for the school. They challenge you appropriately and regularly; they want to tease out, understand and help shape the improvement of the school. They debate and seek to look behind what they are being told. They have deep confidence in you as the new headteacher. Governors are delighted with the fresh thinking you have brought and how you have sustained the school during your first year at Moorgate.

- Staff and leaders have created excellent relationships between home and school. Parents told me how much staff give very close attention to helping children to settle at school. Parents feel well informed about their children's progress. They welcome the advice they receive about how to extend their children's learning at home.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together very well to assess the progress of each child. Observations of children's play and activities are evaluated carefully against expectations of what children should typically achieve. Information is used well to plan quickly for the next steps in children's learning. Detailed tracking of the progress of different groups of children is used very skilfully by leaders in their plans for improving the school. Exceptionally thorough self-review is leading to the precise identification of priorities for improving teaching. These priorities have been converted into effective action, leading to a rapid narrowing of the gaps in achievement between children. Leaders have already established clear plans to enable them and staff to further experiment with these new systems so they are used to maximum benefit in the future.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- even more teaching matches the quality of the very best in the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, two staff, three governors and a link adviser from Lancashire local authority. I met with some parents at the start of the inspection. I reviewed the comments of 13 parents that were given through Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire). You and I observed teaching across the day, spoke to children and looked at staff assessments of children and information about children's progress. I considered a range of information including: reviews of how well the school is doing; plans for the future; documents about the care and protection of children; and school reviews of the quality of teaching.