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Mrs Nicky Donley  
Executive headteacher  
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Lincolnshire  
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Dear Mrs Donley

### **Short inspection of Boston Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 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 good in July 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the base leader work very closely and effectively together to ensure that Boston Nursery continues to improve. You set high expectations for every child, regardless of their starting points, circumstances or needs. You have a united team of staff who work closely, and in shared ways, to ensure that teaching is consistently good in all classes and for all groups of children.

The governing body is effective in its strategic role. This is because, like you and the base leader, they have clear grasp of what the school does well. They hold you to account effectively to ensure that children make strong progress, and work with you to improve any aspects of provision where this is needed.

At the last inspection, inspectors praised the excellent relationships that staff had with children and how, because of this, children settled in quickly and enjoyed coming to school to learn. It is very clear that this highly positive aspect of your school has been sustained. During my visit, I noted how children who were two years old were happily playing, exploring and learning with adults. This was because of the visibly caring and friendly manner of all adults, regardless of their role. As a result, children quickly feel secure in the school and are keen to talk to adults about what they are learning and ask them questions, which staff answer well.

Children enter the school with particularly low levels of communication and language skills, with many speaking very little or no English when they begin.

However, they begin to catch up quickly because staff ensure that no opportunity is wasted to model and promote children's speaking and understanding. Staff encourage children continually to talk, promoting their confidence and independence, as well as giving them many opportunities to make appropriate choices. Staff pay particular attention to developing the communication of the many children who arrive at the school in the very early stages of learning English as an additional language. Some teaching assistants speak Polish and Russian and help these children to settle in well too. At first, these staff communicate in both the child's native language and in English simultaneously. As these children develop greater confidence, staff gently adjust what they say so that that, over time, children can communicate effectively in English. However, staff always take care to recognise and value a child's native tongue, and to praise them for their ability to speak more than one language.

As a result of the respectful attitude of staff towards children, and the modelling of good manners, children's behaviour is excellent. They accept each other's differences happily and learn to work alongside each other from a young age. I saw, for example, how two-year-old children were sharing chalk to help draw a big dinosaur on the outside learning area, sketching its eyes and long tail. Children also like to help out wherever they can. For example, children I met explained to me how they were using a brush to clean the frost off the climbing equipment because it had been a chilly night. Children are polite to visitors because staff show them that courtesy is always important, reminding them to say 'please' and 'thank you' appropriately.

The engagement that you and your staff have with parents is a strength of the school. Staff meet every six or seven weeks with them to discuss the progress their children are making, and provide them with good levels of information to help them support their child's learning at home. During my visit, I spoke with a considerable number of parents. All of them were extremely positive about the school's leadership, and all other aspects of provision. A number of them described to me the impressive progress that their child had made since beginning at your school, and how you and the base leader always 'really go the extra mile' for children with particular needs.

At the last inspection, inspectors noted that you had devised a new tracking system for recording children's progress. They asked you to develop this so that it became a sharp tool for addressing weaknesses in children's learning and for measuring their outcomes. The school's tracking system is now operating very well. The information for each cohort covers all areas of learning and is clear to interpret.

The effectiveness of this system is enhanced because it is underpinned by good recording of the progress that children make each day in the classroom. During my visit, I saw how staff then use their assessments to plan the next steps for learning for children of different ability levels and in different groups. You ensure that staff check that their assessments are accurate by discussing them with colleagues at Kirton Primary and Nursery School, the school which Boston Nursery is federated with, and where you are also executive headteacher.

Almost all children enter the school with levels of skills that are below those typically found in children of the same age, with around one in four children coming in well below typical levels in most areas of learning. By the time they leave the nursery, a majority are working broadly in line with the expectations for their age. This represents good overall progress, with some children making rapid progress from their starting points. During my visit, I also saw compelling evidence of how the progress of children accelerates the longer they are in your school. No group of children at Boston Nursery School makes anything less than good progress, because teaching is of a consistently good quality.

During the inspection, governors explained to me that the school has only very recently received its early years pupil premium allocation from the local authority. This means that, until now, you have been unable to give the additional support that this funding would provide to disadvantaged children.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all staff fully understand their responsibility to be extremely vigilant for any sign, however slight, that any child could be being harmed. All staff have undergone training in safeguarding, and those I met were able to describe confidently to me the indicators of different forms of abuse. Safeguarding remains a very high priority for you and all your staff. The single central register shows that appropriate vetting checks are made and recorded when staff are appointed. You and your staff check the school site daily to check that it is secure.

You and the base leader have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You make brisk referrals to a wide range of external agencies whenever needed, and work well with them to ensure that children are supported effectively.

Children feel very safe in your nursery, because they see how your staff are very kind towards them, and that they can always approach them if they feel worried or upset about anything. Your staff teach them about, for example, the need to move about safely in school and never to run indoors. As a result, even when children are moving energetically about outside, they do not push or bump into others. Children are taught, in a sensitive and age-appropriate way, how to stay safe when walking on pavements and to wash their hands properly after they use the toilet so they do not spread germs and become ill.

### **Inspection findings**

- You and the base leader are a close and united team who have written a clear and detailed evaluation of the many strengths of Boston Nursery, and a sensible plan for continuing to improve the school.
- You ensure that all children are always included in all areas of the curriculum. Staff adjust their provision sensitively and carefully to meet the needs of those children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, who speak English as an additional language or those children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. As a result, all children have full access to all learning.

- Arrangements for the performance management of staff are effective. You link clear targets to improve teachers' classroom performance with professional development opportunities to help them become progressively more skilled in their roles.
- All staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire gave positive responses to all questions. As one member explained, 'The staff are a great team and there is always advice and support when required. The children always come first.'
- The tracking system for recording children's outcomes is comprehensive and detailed. It gives clear information on the progress and attainment of different groups, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, those children who are disadvantaged, and those who speak English as an additional language. As a result, governors can hold you and the base leader to account effectively for the progress that children make.
- Evidence seen in children's 'learning journeys' confirm that the assessments staff make of children are accurate. These records are of good quality because they describe and show in good detail the things each pupil has learned, in relation to typical children of a similar age.
- The learning environment is attractive and spacious. The indoor classroom areas are inviting and teachers use them well. For example, during my visit staff were showing children how to make modelling dough together, to improve their physical skills by moulding shapes from it.
- Staff use the outdoor learning spaces equally well too. They provide good resources for children to play imaginatively, as well as practise their skills in writing and number. I noted how, for instance, staff were using skittles with spots on them to help children to recognise and count different numbers.
- Staff are particularly skilled in teaching children new words, carefully repeating these several times in new ways until children copy them and begin to use them themselves.
- Children are keen to learn to read, and they take much pleasure from books. I saw how teaching assistants were helping children to understand written stories and encouraging them successfully to respond appropriately to the text. Staff also develop children's love of books by creating special places to read. For example, in order to read a story about owls they and the children had carefully filled a large box with leaves and pinecones, alongside toy owls. This had made the space cosy and inviting.
- Children are taught British values well. They take great enjoyment in giving their opinions and being able to choose a variety of learning activities to do in school. They follow the instructions adults give them because they understand that staff are doing this so that they learn well and everyone will stay happy. They also work continually alongside other children, many of whom have different cultures and languages to their own. As a result, pupils become respectful and very tolerant of others.

- Children's attention span is good. They concentrate on the tasks they are doing and do not become easily distracted.
- Children in all groups make at least good progress from their starting points. This includes those children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, who are well supported. There is no visible difference between the rate of progress of children who are two years old and those who are older.
- The proportions of children who reach the expectations for their age in speaking are lower than they are in other areas, but this is because children enter the nursery with particularly low skills in this area. Nevertheless, their progress in speaking is nothing less than good and, for some pupils, it is outstanding.
- The most able children attain skills above those typically found in children of the same age by the time they leave, with particularly high skills in reading.
- By the time they leave the school, disadvantaged children overall do not yet attain as highly as other children in some areas, such as listening and attention. This is because they generally enter the school with lower skills in these areas. However, they make at least good and improving progress from their starting points. There are too few of the most able disadvantaged children to be able to report on their progress without the risk of identifying them.
- Governors have not yet been able to measure the impact of the early years pupil premium on improving the rates of progress for disadvantaged children, because your school has only recently received the funding. You told me that you plan to spend it to give these children additional support and learning resources in order to accelerate their progress in areas where they need to catch up most. This is a sensible strategy. Governors agree that they need to ensure that you and the base leader spend the funding to maximum effect.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors check that leaders spend the early years pupil premium funding in highly effective ways so that it helps to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged children in the areas of learning where they need to catch up most.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I shared my key lines of enquiry with you, which related to: whether the areas for improvement, identified at the last inspection, had been addressed effectively; the rates of progress for all children, including disadvantaged children; the quality of teaching for all children, including those who are two years of age; and the effectiveness of safeguarding. I met with you, representatives of the governing body and the teacher for pre-school children. We visited all classes to observe teaching and learning, where I noted children's behaviour and observed children reading books with staff. At the time of the inspection, there were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, for statistics to be analysed. However, I read the two comments received through its free text facility and considered the views of 84 parents who had replied to the school's recent questionnaire. I also met with a considerable number of parents who came to collect their child at the end of morning session. I examined responses from those members of staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire. I read a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, your school development plan and information on outcomes for children currently in the school. I studied anonymised examples of teachers' appraisal and examined safeguarding records and policies. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.