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Mrs Anne Stoker
Headteacher
Ashfield Nursery School
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Dear Mrs Stoker

Short inspection of Ashfield Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2017, 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 November 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 know your children and their extended families exceptionally well. The very strong relationships you have fostered are evident from the warm greeting every child receives when they meet you at the start of each day. Every child is known to you as the very special individual they are and your dedication and affection towards all of the children at Ashfield shines as a beacon. Parents take great comfort from this, as evidenced by the very many parents who wanted to speak to me to share their admiration of and gratitude to you and your staff.

Your commitment to nurturing every child to be a responsible, kind and thoughtful little person is shared by all staff. As a result, you have created a highly cohesive and highly effective team. They share your vision and commitment to ensure every child reaches their potential academically, socially and emotionally within a safe and stimulating environment.

As part of the inspection I wanted to check that the recently established provision for two-year-olds was of a similarly high standard as the other classes in the Nursery. You have appointed staff whose expertise shines through. They are highly skilled practitioners who are excellent role models in fostering those crucially important early language skills in children. Staff offer lots of encouragement and lots of smiles to more reticent children, particularly those children who speak English as an additional language, and offer them boundless support to make sense of their experiences. As a result, children are making outstanding progress from their starting points and securing basic skills, knowledge and understanding that supports future learning.

I also wanted to check how well leaders used assessment information to identify precisely what needs to be done to raise achievement. Teachers use their assessments carefully to plan activities that build children's skills and move children on exceptionally well from their prior level of development. Teachers' profound understanding of children's early childhood development ensures that any misconceptions are addressed swiftly and that children in all classes are making sustained and substantial progress. Your tracking procedures allow you to review the achievement of children each term and to make the changes required to secure further improvements in outcomes. Although you pay close attention to the progress of disadvantaged children, those who speak English as an additional language and children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, plans for improvement are not as precise for the most able children.

Governors are equally passionate about Ashfield Nursery School and share the same drive and determination to provide an outstanding experience for all children. They acknowledge the uncertainty surrounding nursery funding and are exploring all options, with neighbouring nursery schools, to secure financial viability moving forward. They have a good understanding of how well children are achieving, particularly disadvantaged children, and they ensure that pupil premium funding is spent wisely. Information they receive shows that these children make strong progress and their outcomes are often higher than that of their peers. However, governors have not ensured that the pupil premium report on the school's website is as detailed as it needs to be.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff are appropriately trained each academic year to ensure that they are up to date with the most recent legislation and know exactly what to do should they have any safeguarding concerns. Records are detailed and external agencies are used for advice and support where appropriate.

A designated governor is responsible for health and safety and safeguarding. He makes regular checks to ensure that the school is compliant with legislation and to

identify any potential hazards. Findings are reported back at full governing body meetings, where wider governor responsibilities ensure that action is taken to minimise risk and ensure children's safety.

Access to the school is managed well. The very many stairs and corridors are risk assessed and managed effectively, so that the very youngest children have safe movement between rooms and between indoor and outdoor provision. This is supporting children's growing understanding of their personal safety and that of others and is having a positive impact on children's physical development.

Leaders encourage good attendance and recognise this as an important part of school readiness. A raft of procedures is undertaken to secure improved rates of attendance by all children. Despite these efforts, you acknowledge that attendance is not as you want it to be, particularly in the two-year-old classes.

Inspection findings

- You have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Your accurate self-evaluation is communicated effectively to others. As a result, there is a shared vision for the pursuit of excellence from all.
- Warm and trusting relationships permeate the ethos of the school and expectations for outstanding behaviour are so well embedded that they go unnoticed. Even the very youngest children understand what good sitting, good listening and good looking means.
- Staff are highly skilled practitioners with a sound understanding of the developmental needs of very young children. They offer lots of support and encouragement, but are equally intuitive to when children need time to think, to absorb and to process. As a result, children are making outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Lots of rhyming and counting songs, music and movement fills the air at Ashfield. This is having a powerful impact on children's communication and language development, which is particularly low on entry to school.
- Outdoor provision is very well resourced and children demonstrate great confidence to climb and navigate your extensive grounds. Access to the outdoor space is organised effectively and provides many wonderful opportunities for children to explore the world around them. This is having a particularly positive impact on children's prime areas of learning in physical and personal and social development, where progress for all groups of children is rapid.
- Children enter school with skills below those which would be typically expected. Highly skilled staff ensure that children make outstanding progress from their starting points, with the vast majority reaching age-related expectations by the time they are due to transfer to primary school.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged children and the most able disadvantaged children

are equally outstanding. The introduction of the two-year-old offer is demonstrably diminishing any differences in the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding expected for young children.

- Staff are positive role models for language development and their highly effective questioning and timely intervention ensures that children quickly move on in their learning, especially for the growing proportions of children who speak English as an additional language. Their progress is outstanding and is particularly rapid in the area of learning for communication and language development.
- The most able children demonstrate great maturity and sensitivity when working on collaborative tasks and are supportive and encouraging of their less confident peers. Open-ended activities and opportunities to explore and investigate ensure that the most able children are making good progress from their starting points. However, very occasionally some activities lack sufficient challenge to move children on in their learning as swiftly as their peers, and leaders' plans for improvement are not precise in setting measurable targets for this group of children. This means that only a small proportion are exceeding age-related expectations by the time they leave school.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from highly individualised activities that are provided to meet their needs. Highly effective support staff and strong links with specialist advisory staff ensure that every opportunity is taken for children to be involved in learning alongside their peers. As a result, they are making the same progress as their peers in the prime areas of learning. It is often slower in the specific areas of learning, dependent upon their learning needs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans for improvement include more measurable targets for the achievement of the most able children, so that more children can exceed expected levels of attainment and governors can check more precisely the impact of the school's work
- the pupil premium report on the school's website is fully compliant with the Department for Education's requirements
- improved attendance is encouraged, particularly in the two-year-old offer, so that your high expectations for strong attendance are met.

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

Yours sincerely

Diane Buckle

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

As part of the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documentation. These included documents relating to the safeguarding of children, the school's improvement plans and your written evaluation of the school's work. I visited lessons with you and reviewed past and current information on children's learning and progress. I talked to children about their learning during the day. Meetings were held with you, senior leaders, staff and four representatives from the governing body. A meeting was also held with the school's improvement adviser from Newcastle local authority. I took account of 14 responses to the Ofsted inspection survey, Parent View, and I talked to parents at the end of the day, as well as considering responses to your own parental questionnaire. I also took account of the 13 responses to the staff survey.