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Miss Jayne Smith  
Headteacher  
Oxclose Nursery School  
Oxclose Crescent  
Spennymoor  
County Durham  
DL16 6RU

Dear Miss Smith

### **Short inspection of Oxclose Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 May 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 nursery was judged to be outstanding in November 2013.

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

You and the leadership team have maintained the outstanding quality of education in the nursery since the last inspection. You are always striving for 'better than the best'. You consistently achieve this through the calm and reflective nature of your highly effective management style, and through your caring relationships with children, staff, parents and carers and the wider community. Parents talk enthusiastically of the way they feel the nursery is part of their extended family, and how you and your staff willingly go the extra mile to support and make them feel included in the life of the nursery. This is reflected in the high number of parents who volunteer to help in the nursery, and by the numbers of parents who want to support you by becoming members of the governing body. This whole-family approach is a strength of the nursery.

The unique international partnerships you have forged across Europe have deepened the children's awareness of lives lived beyond their own community. This, along with the keen sense of fairness and compassion evident across the nursery, means children are well prepared to live in modern Britain. Staff consistently make learning fun and put the children at the centre of all they do. Children's interests and suggestions are always included in the day-to-day planning, meaning that children are constantly engaged in their learning. The wide range of experiences you provide for the children outside of the classroom truly engages them in their learning and their community. From regular weekly visits to the sports centre for swimming and gymnastics sessions led by qualified coaches, visits to and from the police, going to feed the deer in the park, to the highly imaginative, excellent

quality, outdoor environment you continue to develop around the nursery, all are focused on improving outcomes for the children.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve attainment in reading to equal that achieved in writing. You have not only met this target but have surpassed it. Attainment in reading is now better than that in writing. Since the last inspection, you have refined the assessment process and recording of achievements so that it is now much more focused on the progress and attainment of the individual child. Your incisive data analysis shows that overall progress and attainment continues to increase year on year. You recognised that those children who enter the nursery with speech and language delay needed a dedicated space to work with the high-quality staff in a more-focused environment. By reorganising and extending the building you have enabled this to happen, with the outcome that children are showing even more rapid improvement in these skills. The two-year-old provision has been developed at the right pace to ensure that it is of the highest quality, and that it has not had any detrimental impact on the existing provision for three- and four-year-olds. The environment addresses the needs of this group sympathetically, enabling them to 'have the space to learn'.

You have correctly identified that, while attainment and progress for most children in literacy is very good, it is still not yet as strong as in the other areas of learning. You see this as a priority and are acting to address this. The effectiveness of this can be seen in the reducing gap between the number of children who are making outstanding progress in this area and the other areas of the curriculum.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All necessary checks have been undertaken and evidence is kept securely on file to ensure that all adults working in the nursery are meeting the required child protection standards. These are monitored termly by the chair of the governing body and audited by the local authority. Staff and governors have completed all statutory training and know the procedures to follow should they be worried about a child or suspect a child is missing. All your policies and procedures are formally reviewed every year and updated as necessary.

The school works exceptionally well with other professionals to meet the needs of all children, particularly the most vulnerable, and ensures that parents are involved in the process. The exemplary records securely kept in the nursery ably demonstrate this. Parents talk of how well supported they feel when they have been going through any difficulties in their family life.

All activities are risk assessed, and the governor with responsibility for health and safety monitors these termly to ensure that children are learning in a safe environment. Parents state how safe their children are. Staff say that they have had additional training since the extension to the building in order to secure the children's safety.

## Inspection findings

- All children, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress. On average, children make two whole years of progress in the one year they are typically in the nursery. Those who stay for longer make much more progress than might be expected.
- Children are all without fail consistently engaged in learning. This is because staff make sure they follow the interests of the children. They also act on suggestions the children make for their own learning. For example, following the phonics session observed during the inspection, children suggest they set about finding objects whose names rhyme.
- They continue to successfully close the gap between literacy and other areas of the curriculum.
- Reading has shown a significant increase in attainment and now exceeds that in writing. This is due to the excellent training and dedication of leaders and staff in this area of the curriculum. High-quality professional development has been accessed by the staff, and in-house training is also undertaken to ensure that excellent practice is embedded across the nursery. This means children are more proficient at being able to retell stories they have read.
- The teaching of the sounds letters make is very strong. Skilful staff make this learning fun and interesting. Even the youngest are beginning to recognise rhyme and can identify both rhyming and non-rhyming words. They enjoy listening to nonsense words and matching the sounds to those in their name.
- Attainment in communication has improved. Staff working with the youngest children are highly skilled in verbalising activities through ongoing commentary, but also asking questions to develop children's thinking such as, 'I wonder what will happen if...'. Parents comment on how their children are improving their skills and confidence socially and in terms of communication.
- The activities out of the nursery are a strength. Gymnastics and swimming take place weekly. National and international gymnastic careers have been forged in the nursery, because of the access to Olympic-standard facilities in the community.
- You noted in your evaluation of the nursery that attendance was a concern. However, you have put in place highly effective strategies that mean some groups are now achieving full attendance, while others are rapidly moving to the same position.
- Children are enabled to set their own level of challenge. For example, by making a 'speedway' in the outdoor area to ride their bikes and learn how to corner safely. Or when in the gym, learning to balance on the beams or drop from the high bar in a safe manner.
- Children are confident, polite, and well mannered towards each other. For example, when working alongside each other in the water, two-year-olds ask each other to share equipment, and readily accept each other's response, even if

negative.

- Targets in your development plan are clearly focused on improving outcomes for children. They are based on an incisive analysis of data. Governors have each effectively taken a priority to monitor, and do so robustly and with vigour. Their challenges, as evidenced in the minutes of their meetings, are based on data and knowing the community and nursery extremely well.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to successfully close the gap in attainment between literacy and other areas of the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Dorrity  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The focus of the inspection was to check whether the high standards identified at the previous inspection had been maintained, to find out how well particular groups of children were progressing and whether attainment in reading and literacy had continued to improve.

I observed learning in several sessions, both indoor and outside, with some activities led by children and three led by adults. We jointly observed a group session led by a member of staff, a session in the two-year-old provision and a regular weekly visit to the sports centre gymnasium in Spennymoor.

I considered a range of evidence including the school's latest assessment information about children's learning and development, the school improvement plan, leaders' self-evaluation, children's work and planning documents.

I met with three members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority.

I considered the responses on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and spoke with five parents.

I met with you and a member of staff.