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Mrs Josephine Angel
Headteacher
King's Hedges Nursery School
Northfield Avenue
Cambridge
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Dear Mrs Angel

Short inspection of King's Hedges Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 24 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 school was judged to be good in September 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 other senior leaders have an excellent understanding of the needs of the varied community you serve. You have rightly earned the confidence and respect of your staff, governors and parents. Your work is highly valued by them all and you will be able to retire at the end of the academic year proud of what you have achieved.

The leadership team monitors provision thoroughly. This means that you have a good understanding of what still needs improvement, including further developing the use of outdoor provision and ironing out the remaining inconsistencies in teaching.

Children make good progress because all staff are determined to help them fulfil their potential. Staff work together extremely well. They ensure that school is a fun place to be. This is seen in the smiling faces that arrive at school at the start of each session. As one parent commented, 'The children cannot wait to get through the school gates to start working or playing.'

Children are extremely happy at school. They develop confidence beyond their years because of the high expectations of staff. There is a delightful atmosphere in classes as children work together, sharing their ideas and talking about what they

are learning. They behave very sensibly and are polite and well mannered at all times. They are set good examples by all staff, who speak to the children and each other with respect.

Provision for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the school is managed extremely well. Adults are well trained and provide high-quality support for these children, very successfully meeting a range of diverse needs.

You have very strong links with parents. The whole school team works together to involve parents in their children's education. You welcome parents into school and give them many opportunities to work with their children or to learn about how they can help them at home. One parent summed up the views of others I spoke to by saying that, 'The school has made a real difference to our lives.'

One of the things parents are especially pleased about is the support given to two-year-old children in the 'Me 2 Club'. I can see that this is making a real difference to these children's social development and academic progress. Adults provide high-quality support to this age group. This ensures that the youngest children make the same rapid progress as others. Your determination to ensure that you continue to get funding from outside sources for this project is indicative of your passion for getting the very best for your local community.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is strong. You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality.

You make sure that training for staff takes place regularly, including for new staff who join during the year. This ensures that their responsibilities are clearly understood. Staff know the children and their families well. They are vigilant in spotting and responding to any potential problems as soon as they arise.

You ensure that vulnerable children are given high-quality support. You have excellent links with external agencies such as health visitors, family support workers and social services so that you can quickly get the support needed.

Children show a very good understanding of how to stay safe when they are playing. For example, they show good consideration for the needs of others by reminding each other about the safety rules when running around the wooded area. A recent school 'Staying Safe' initiative helped children to learn about how to avoid danger when crossing roads.

Inspection findings

- We met at the start of the inspection to agree the key lines of enquiry for my day in school. The first of these looked at the recommendation from the previous inspection to improve the outdoor provision. Good progress has been made in

tackling this weakness. The school now has a very well-resourced outdoor area that includes a wonderful wooded area where children can learn about the world around them. Adults use the outdoor area well to promote children's physical development, but we saw that it is not yet used to equally good effect across the whole of the curriculum. We agreed that outdoor practice is not as strong as indoor practice and that staff need to do even more to optimise this aspect of the provision.

- We agreed as a second line of enquiry to look at children's progress. This was to check whether this strength had been maintained since the previous inspection. I found that children continue to make good progress across the school. When they start school, very few children are working at a typical level of development for their age. They acquire new skills quickly. Most children are working at the levels expected for their age by the time they move on, reflecting their good progress over time.
- School records show that the different groups in school, including disadvantaged children, make equally strong progress. Children with English as an additional language quickly develop early speaking skills.
- High-quality provision ensures that children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress. Skills develop especially quickly in the 'Me 2 Club'. The 'So 2 Speak' sessions are also very well organised and have a highly positive effect on children's early language development.
- Our third line of enquiry was to check that the quality of teaching had been maintained since the previous inspection and that weaknesses found at that time had been addressed. I found that teaching continues to support good learning over time. There is a vibrant indoor environment. Adults plan work indoors that builds successfully on the children's interests and aptitudes. They make learning purposeful by linking work to a central topic. For example, as part of their current topic on 'The World', children listen to music from different countries, learn about flags, look at maps and make food that reflects different cultures.
- The previous inspection identified that teaching did not always meet differing needs well enough. I found that most of the time adults adapt work quickly to take account of different starting points. On some occasions, there is exceptionally strong challenge for the most able children. For example, in a mathematics group activity, children's learning about simple addition was supported extremely well by the teaching assistant's very high expectations. However, this is not always the case and we agreed that this is an area that still needs improving.
- For our final line of enquiry, we decided to look at the impact of recent staff changes on the quality of provision and the effectiveness of leadership. We wanted to check that this had been managed well enough. I was reassured that this instability has been handled well so that it has not adversely affected children's learning.
- There is no complacency and you and your governing body are doing the right things to improve the provision further. Governors are contributing well to planning for the school's next steps under the new headteacher. Together, you

have ensured that there is a culture of high expectations across the school. This is why children flourish both socially and academically.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff maximise use of the outdoor learning area so that the high-quality indoor provision is replicated more frequently outside
- staff respond quickly to move learning on when the most able children are ready for the next steps in their learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Evidence collected on inspection included:

- observations of teaching and learning both indoors and outdoors across the school during learning walks with the senior leaders
- meetings with senior leaders and members of the governing body
- informal discussions with parents and children
- the scrutiny of 16 responses to the staff questionnaire
- consideration of different types of information supplied by the school, including checks on the quality of teaching, the school development plan and records relating to attendance and safeguarding procedures
- a scrutiny of school assessment information and children's work.