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Mrs Jo Noble
Headteacher
The Gainsborough Nursery School
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Dear Mrs Noble

Short inspection of The Gainsborough Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 September 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 have ensured that the highest of expectations for the potential of every child have been sustained. You are clear that, regardless of the levels of skills that children enter the school with, they must make brisk progress in all areas of learning, and particularly those they need to catch up in.

Staff work extremely closely as a team, moving about between classes while working in consistent, shared ways. They know children and their families very well indeed. As a result of this high level of knowledge, they are able to plan ambitious learning precisely, in order to attend to the different needs and skills of children, as well as supporting families so that they can help their children learn at home. Unsurprisingly, parents whom I met during the family picnic event were unanimously and highly positive about your school. They explained how, because of vibrant and exciting teaching, their children make great and quick gains.

Teaching is excellent. As well as leading continual and well-planned group activities each day, staff help children to plan their own learning each session and discuss this with them. Staff take great care to always speak to each other and to children with respect and kindness. Because of excellent modelling by staff, children quickly become polite and courteous to each other, cooperating happily as they work and play together. Staff also take every opportunity to widen children's vocabulary, introducing them to such terms as 'anticlockwise' and 'vertices', and phrases such as 'fewer than'. In addition, they quickly attend to any misconceptions children have,

such as when explaining how many faces a circle has. The learning environment in the school is vibrant, with the outdoor area being an exemplary space for children to develop their imagination and consistently have high-quality activities across all areas of the curriculum. Children have bright, beaming smiles on their faces whether, for example, they run to find hidden shapes in the grassed area, share a book with staff or learn to climb on the outdoor equipment.

As a result of such high-quality teaching, children make very swift progress from their starting points. A large majority of children enter the school aged two with skills that are below, or well below, those typically found in children of the same age. By the time they transfer into the next class, around three quarters have caught up in a majority of areas of learning. Learning does not slow down in the Nursery classes but is sustained at a high rate. By the time pupils leave the school, their attainment is in line with, or exceeds that of, skills typically found. The early years pupil premium is spent wisely so that those children who are disadvantaged make progress that is similarly substantial as, or even faster than, others in the school. In addition, the most able children also make rapid gains because they are given difficult tasks to do and are never allowed to mark time. The work that I saw for these children showed that they are tackling activities to make them think deeply, including, in one instance, learning to answer sums such as 9×5 and writing Roman numerals up to 21.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to check that the support that staff give to children who spend the shortest time in your school results in them making rapid gains. You have convincingly ensured that this is the case. Pupils who spend only one or two terms at The Gainsborough Nursery make similarly brisk progress from when they join compared to children who attend for longer.

You are very ably supported in your work by the governing body, which nevertheless shares your high expectations and holds you and the staff rigorously to account. Governors study the progress of all groups of children closely and ask searching questions if any children make less than excellent progress, or if children's gains in any area of learning are less than they are in others. Although almost no children currently attend on a full-time basis, governors are fully aware that the school will shortly need to meet national requirements for full-time provision for children whose parents want this and who are eligible. As a result, you and governors are currently discussing the implementation of this considerable adjustment, so as to sustain the school's excellent provision. You and your staff are considering how you will ensure that teaching is planned so that these pupils continue to be cared for, remain highly enthusiastic to learn and make even greater progress because they are attending for greater amounts of time.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff are highly aware of the need for them to have exceptional levels of vigilance towards the children in their care. All staff are thoroughly and regularly trained in safeguarding and could describe to me a wide range of the many different indicators that might suggest that a child could be being harmed. Should they become in any way concerned, staff know the school's procedure to report this

information and the need to do this immediately. You and the leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The school's single central register is meticulously kept up to date. Parents who I met during my visit strongly believed that staff keep their children feeling safe.

Children also behave safely at The Gainsborough Nursery. They move around the school mindful of the proximity of others, taking care not to bump into each other, even when energetically using tricycles outdoors with whoops of enjoyment. Staff teach them how to, for example, keep safe in the sun and to drink plenty of water in the hot weather, as well as to eat healthily and take plenty of exercise. One of the governors, who is also a police community support officer, visits the school to tell children why they should not go off with strangers, and why police officers are helpful because they keep everyone safe.

Inspection findings

- Children flourish at the school because of highly engaging teaching that is grounded in a deep understanding of the needs of children. Teachers plan precisely so that despite children attending on different days and sessions, no child misses out on learning a particular skill or repeats a learning activity unnecessarily. Teaching is also designed to build on children's interests, with a wide and diverse curriculum that excites them. For example, children harvest their own apples before weighing ingredients and combining them to make a fruit crumble. As a result of inspirational teaching, children love coming to school to learn and they complete their tasks eagerly.
- Children develop high levels of independence as learners, despite their young age. They effectively make appropriate choices about what tasks they will complete each session.
- You know all the children very well, so can be sure that when you examine the assessments that staff make of children, they are accurate. Staff discuss these assessments together regularly and share them, and children's work, when they meet with colleagues in other local nursery settings.
- Data that you provided for me, which was confirmed in children's online learning journals and their workbooks, shows that children make excellent progress from their starting points, whether they join the provision as two-year-olds or commence in the following year at the age of three.
- Children leave the school very well prepared for the next year of their education, not only because of their secure skills across the different areas of learning but because of their personal qualities. Children are very keen learners who want to find out more. They listen to each other and to adults, cooperate very positively and are keen to have a go. Their attention does not wander and is sustained well.
- You are a headteacher who is highly respected by both staff and parents. You ensure that there is no complacency whatsoever. You develop the skills of staff extremely well, with several of them beginning as apprentices and progressing to become qualified practitioners, and some even proceeding to gain degrees.

- You are determined that your staff continue to refine their provision wherever this is possible, and you see that they face all challenges with determination. You rightly believe that your greatest current priority is to ensure a smooth and successful adjustment to organise 30 hours of provision for children whose parents want this. You understand the need to help these children adjust to full-time education and the potential, if the implementation is successful, for them to make still greater gains because they will have more access to outstanding teaching.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff plan so that the different needs of the increased numbers of children who will attend on a full-time basis are met precisely in order that:
 - the emotional and physical well-being of these children is sustained
 - these children continue to make even greater progress 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 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 met you and shared my key lines of enquiry. I also met with members of the governing body. I held a discussion with staff to investigate their approach to their work, along with their opinions of the school and its leadership. At the time of the inspection, there were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, for statistics to be analysed, and no responses to its free-text facility. However, I considered the views of parents who had replied to the school's recent questionnaire and met with a number of them during the school day. You and I visited all classes in the school, spending a short time in each. I looked at a sample of children's work. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement, information on how the early years pupil premium funding is spent and a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information. I observed children's behaviour in lessons. We visited the school's breakfast club to check that children were safe, happy and looked after well.