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Ms Sally Franklin
North Islington Nursery School
110–112 Tollington Park
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Dear Ms Franklin

Short inspection of North Islington Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 04 October 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment, you have worked well with governors and with the local authority to build on the strengths of the school identified at the last inspection. You have also ensured that the school has made good progress within the areas for development that were identified.

Governors and staff share your vision and your drive to move the school to outstanding. Your newly appointed deputy headteacher has settled into her role very well. Leadership has good capacity to move the school forward.

You have created a safe and nurturing environment. Children, together with their parents and carers, are supported very well by staff when they join the Nursery. Parents appreciate the welcome they receive and the quality of provision on offer for their children. The school ethos of 'happy to be here – a place where everyone feels valued' is evident in all aspects of the school's work.

You have identified the right priorities to continue the school's journey to outstanding. You and the deputy headteacher are accurate and incisive in making judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. You are able to pinpoint exactly what practitioners need to do to improve their good teaching skills further.

You recognise that further work is needed to develop practitioners' questioning skills to challenge children to be able to make the best possible progress in all areas of learning. Practitioners also need to develop their confidence in understanding how to extend children's early literacy and numeracy skills.

Sometimes staff do not routinely check on the progress of individuals and groups when they are working or playing independently. This occasionally means that they miss opportunities to prompt and support children's learning or to remind children about sharing or turn taking.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. Staff care about the safety and well-being of the children for whom they are responsible. Warm and caring relationships between staff and children underpin the work of the school.

Leaders do not shy away from challenging or confrontational situations with parents and carers if they believe a child is at risk. Staff and governors receive appropriate training on all aspects of safeguarding. The designated leads are visible across the school. Posters ensure that staff and visitors are in no doubt about what to do if they are concerned about a child.

Referral systems are used consistently and effectively. Swift action is taken as a result of any referral. Leaders ensure that they seek appropriate advice and support from external agencies.

Leaders are vigilant in their risk assessments of any potential safety issues within the learning environment.

Inspection findings

- Our first agreed focus for the inspection was to consider how effective the learning environment and the practitioners are in ensuring that children make strong sustained progress. The learning environment provides opportunities and resources for children to develop well in all areas of learning.
- Since the previous inspection, you have adopted an 'in the moment' approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Learning starts with children's interests. Adults support and develop children's interests through their interactions with groups and individuals. Children also play and learn confidently either alone or with their classmates, supported by a wide range of resources and activities. As a result, children make good progress from their starting points.
- Practitioners motivate children to make the best use of all the resources on offer to them and they make sure that learning is fun. Even the youngest children at the Nursery are motivated to play and explore. Practitioners inspire children to be creative and imaginative in their learning.
- While practitioners are confident in identifying next steps for children in most of the areas of development, they occasionally lack confidence in challenging children to build on their emerging writing and mathematics skills. Sometimes,

staff readily accept answers from children without offering an additional challenging question which would help them to think more deeply or to reason. Occasionally, practitioners repeat and echo what children say instead of responding to their comments in ways that build on their knowledge.

- Our next focus for the inspection was to consider how well leaders and staff engage with parents and carers to support children's learning. The 26 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are very happy with the work of the school. Many parents spoke highly of the care their children receive. They also appreciate the support they receive from the school when their children start at Nursery. A typical comment from the parents was 'The staff are so dedicated.'
- You try to engage parents in a range of ways in their children's learning. Your lending library is successful and your initiative to involve parents and children in making and playing mathematics games together has had a good impact. Governors recognise that they could perhaps be more 'visible' to parents. Parents spoken to during the inspection are unsure who the governors are. The new parent-teacher association is also designed to involve more parents in the life of the school.
- Many parents contribute to the online progress tracker for their children but some do not. Rightly, you are trying to find ways to help these parents access and use this ongoing record of children's achievement.
- We also agreed to focus on how you monitor the progress that children make from their various starting points when they join the Nursery. You have improved your analysis of children's progress recently through reviewing your systems. This ensures that you track the progress of different groups of children. You have reflected well on good advice from the local authority to ensure that your system gives you an accurate picture of children's achievement.
- You use the system forensically to identify groups or individuals who are not making the progress you expect. You adjust provision accordingly. Governors have been proactive in helping you to review your system. As such, they have a sharp understanding of the progress that children are making.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- practitioners have consistently high expectations of what children can achieve in writing and in mathematics
- practitioners use skilful questioning to challenge children and help them make even better progress in all areas of learning
- adults routinely and regularly monitor the progress children are making when they are playing and learning alone or with classmates.

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

published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Dollner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I had discussions with senior leaders about their school improvement work and safeguarding arrangements. I met with the members of the governing body. I went on learning walks with you and on my own. I talked with children and with parents. I scrutinised a range of documents relating to the school's self-evaluation and to safeguarding. I analysed minutes of governing body meetings. The 26 responses to Parent View were reviewed. I spoke with a representative of the local authority.