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Mrs Rachel Gillett
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Rachel Gillett

Short inspection of Whitnash Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 16 November 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.

You provide highly effective and inspirational leadership. The school has worked in successful partnership with Kenilworth Nursery School as part of a soft federation for the last three years. You have driven improvements in the school with your visionary and ambitious promotion of early years excellence. For example, the school has been involved in a three-year research project to support vulnerable children and their families. It is also a strategic partner in the Warwickshire Consortium Teaching School Alliance, of which you are a co-lead, in addition to working with the Griffin Teaching School Alliance. More recently, the school has begun delivery of an early years postgraduate qualification in partnership with Warwick University. Factors such as these place you at the cutting edge of early years developments within the sector. As a result, you have maintained, and further improved, the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The school's vision of 'celebrating every child's uniqueness' is borne out strongly in nursery practice. Staff are fulsome in their praise of children when the children demonstrate a new skill and they have an in-depth and insightful knowledge of individual children's characteristics and temperaments. This allows them to maximise opportunities for development as they know precisely when to intervene to prompt or challenge a child further during an activity. Children are happy and content and parents are delighted with the progress their children make. A typical comment made by a parent sums up the views of many, 'From the very first day,

our daughter has loved attending this nursery.' Another added, 'The staff are always attentive and genuinely listen to any concerns.' Consequently, children thrive in the setting due to the extremely high levels of care and nurture provided by all staff.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. Phonics is taught in small ability groups and you have produced leaflets for parents to provide them with additional information and guidance to enable them to support their children at home. Partnerships with parents are extremely strong and parents have very positive views of the school. Information about their child's development is clear and shared systematically with parents in a variety of ways. However, there is scope to build on these improvements even further, especially in relation to improving the phonic knowledge of children who attend nursery for five terms. Opportunities are occasionally missed to identify where further improvements can be made in planning activities specifically for boys or girls. This is because assessment information gathered does not currently detect in which areas boys do less well than girls or vice versa.

Safeguarding is effective.

You make sure that children's safety and well-being is everyone's responsibility. Frequent training updates are provided, reflecting the latest guidance, to ensure that all staff know what to do if they have any concerns. Any slight concern is quickly and appropriately reported, investigated and kept under review. High-quality records are kept and stored securely and additional advice and guidance are sought when needed. Stringent checks are made on all adults who come into contact with children.

You have established clear rules regarding the use of mobile phones and cameras within the setting. Staff and parents fully understand and adhere to the school's policy on this. Activities are thoroughly assessed for potential risks, and children are taught to make safe choices. While children are given the freedom to explore and investigate, they are encouraged to say 'stop' by raising their hand if they feel uncomfortable with someone or something. This immediately alerts an adult. All adults model safe practice and are highly vigilant in keeping children safe.

Inspection findings

- You, your leadership team and governors share a precise and accurate understanding of why the school is outstanding. However, you are not complacent. You are committed and determined to bring about continual improvement. Thus, you have rightly identified some areas for further improvement and developed a robust and detailed action plan. You monitor all aspects of the school's work closely and share excellent practice among staff. For example, staff have observed the outstanding practice of the lead teacher in teaching music and dance. Not only has this provided staff with some highly effective strategies and ideas to adopt, but also the opportunity to observe children from their key group and see how they interact and behave with a fellow staff member. This adds to and enriches adults' assessments and wider

understanding of individual children.

- Assessments of children's abilities made by you and your staff are highly detailed and accurate. This is because staff have an in-depth knowledge of the children and moderate their judgements with other staff internally and externally. Good use is made of the progress checks for two-year olds, to establish a baseline of children's early abilities on entry to the first Nursery class, Nurture Nursery. Further and ongoing assessments are used effectively throughout the child's time at the school. These assessments are mapped against each child's chronological age so quickly detect whether children, such as those who are disadvantaged, are falling behind.
- You keep a careful track of how well children achieve and identify any children who need additional support or outside agency help. For example, speech and language therapy is quickly accessed to provide support for children who have communication difficulties, and tailored support is provided for children who are identified early as possibly having special educational needs (SEN). As a result, children make rapid and accelerated progress during their time at Nursery from their respective starting points. However, although previously you have analysed differences in progress rates between boys and girls and children who speak English as an additional language, this practice has stalled. This lack of current information reduces the opportunity for staff to adapt activities to meet individual needs and accelerate progress rates even faster.
- Adults regularly share stories with children during the day to promote a love of reading and books. Children are well trained to collect a story book in the reception area to take home to share with their parents, and many do so with great enthusiasm daily. Structured phonic sessions have been successfully introduced, and children quickly acquire knowledge of early letters and sounds through small group or individual teaching time. Parents are also strongly encouraged to support their child's early reading at home. However, the programme of teaching phonics does not run throughout the whole year, and consequently some children who attend for five terms do not build on the knowledge they acquire. Additionally, some adults do not maximise opportunities to use phonic skills routinely during daily child-initiated activities.
- Parents are delighted with how well their children are cared for and taught. Of those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, 100% said they would recommend the school to others. You have worked hard at ensuring that communication with parents is effective. Methods include texts, emails, newsletters, an information board in the school's reception area and regular parent consultations. A 'parent app' has also been skilfully designed to share some key moments of children as they happen at nursery. Assessment information from learning journals and teachers' planning journals is shared regularly. As a result, parents have a good understanding of what their children are learning and how well they are doing. Highly effective induction procedures are in place. Home visits prior to joining the Nursery, and 'tea together' meetings between staff and parents help build positive relationships from the outset. Parents are encouraged to stay with their children for the first day, and some are invited to stay for further sessions, depending on their child's settling-in needs. Consequently, children settle very quickly and parents are fully assured that their

children are safe and happy.

- Teaching in both classes provides children with plenty of opportunities to secure essential skills and knowledge to succeed. Highly imaginative, well-planned activities, both adult-led and child-led, successfully utilise children's own ideas. Staff regularly repeat language and use rhymes and songs to support children's learning. All adults model language correctly and strongly encourage children to use their speaking skills to articulate their ideas. For example, in a dance lesson, children were asked to suggest ways to warm up parts of their body before doing any physical exercise. While children acted out their ideas, the teacher requested 'Can you use your words?' Excellent descriptions then followed with 'wiggle', 'shake', 'jump'.
- Through high expectations and regular practice, all children improve their communication and language ability, which in turn helps support their reading and writing development. Last year, the vast majority of children, including disadvantaged children, reached the expected level of development in almost all areas of learning, including in communication and language, despite some children having very low levels of ability on entry.
- Staff ensure that children encounter an exciting and relevant range of activities, experiences and resources. Children benefit greatly from the additional creative experiences offered, such as working with the artist in residence and receiving high-quality music and dance sessions with the lead teacher. Excellent use is made of the indoor and outdoor areas. Children are suitably clothed for working outdoors, and areas set up are inviting and well organised. Children are strongly encouraged to explore and investigate freely, while adults extend their learning through the use of suitably probing questions and excellent problem-solving activities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- adults use more opportunities to promote children's awareness of phonics during the school day and there is continuity of teaching for children who attend for five terms
- assessment information is analysed for different groups, especially boys and girls, to determine where even greater progress can be made.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, a member of your leadership team and three members of the governing body. I discussed the work of the school with you, including the processes and procedures in place for safeguarding. I visited the Nurture Nursery, your provision for two-year olds, and the main Nursery, provision for three- and four-year olds. In both classrooms, I observed and spoke with children and looked at their learning journals.

I looked at a range of school documents, including the school's information about children's achievement. I also reviewed the school's own evaluation of its work, together with the school development plan. I took account of the 27 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The school's own survey of parents' views was also considered, and additional information collected from parents as they collected their children during the school day. There were nine responses to the staff survey and their views were taken into account.