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Lynsay Falkingham
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Falkingham

Short inspection of Lanterns Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The school has undergone a number of significant changes since the last inspection. The children's centre, an integral part of your school site, closed in October 2016. Provision for the youngest two- and three-year-olds in the 'Bumblebee' class was subject to a separate early years inspection in March 2015. All aspects were judged to be good.

In May 2015, changes to legislation meant that the governing body no longer had to register the provision for the youngest children separately. As a result, this inspection evaluated all aspects of the Nursery's work, including the youngest children.

You have taken on the role of acting headteacher since September 2017. This unexpected change in your role was as a result of the sad and unexpected death of the former headteacher. It has been a difficult time for the school but governors, staff and the local authority value your calm and steady leadership. You and the governors recognise and value the important role that the local authority has played this term. You are receiving well-planned and structured support as a new school leader and staff received funded professional support for their emotional well-being.

Leaders have a very clear view of the school's many strengths. You have also

identified the areas of the Nursery's work that you would like to be even better. For example, you are pleased with consistent approaches to developing children's language and communication skills across the Nursery. However, you think even more can be done to develop children's levels of independence, particularly at lunchtimes.

Governors have ensured that Lanterns remains a hive of community activity. They have shown great tenacity and creativity in ensuring that the well-used and highly regarded services for children and parents have been retained. Partnerships with charitable organisations and service providers are exemplary. As a result, young parents and those with children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are very well supported.

Parents are glowing in their praise of Lanterns. They value the quality of care and education that you and the staff provide. As one parent claims: 'Lanterns is a fantastic Nursery school and my son is so happy to be part of it. The teachers are amazing, happy, welcoming and supportive. I couldn't ask for a better place for my child to learn, grow and achieve.'

You, the governors and staff have worked tirelessly to create a happy and highly inclusive Nursery where children, including the significant proportion who have SEN and/or disabilities, thrive. The inclusion manager is highly knowledgeable and effective in ensuring that children get the best start to their education. Relationships between adults and children are exemplary. Children are happy, safe and keen to learn. Adults are highly knowledgeable, caring and skilled at ensuring that children make very good progress. You have maintained the strengths identified in your last inspections.

Leaders have been reviewing and improving how staff capture and evaluate information about what and how children learn. You rightly identified that staff went through a stage of being 'snap happy'. There was quite a lot of photographic evidence, sometimes of very similar things, often captured without a clear sense of why this was done. This has clearly improved over time. However, you have identified that a small number of staff are still developing their understanding of how to use assessment information to inform how they plan for children's learning. These staff are currently well supported by the team approach you have created at Lanterns.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders have been clear to promote an 'it could happen here' culture. Staff are well trained, including in how to carefully monitor children's well-being. As a result, staff report appropriate concerns to leaders in a timely manner. Leaders make swift and effective referrals to other agencies, including Early Help.

Leaders and staff know children and families very well. Parents who have children with medical conditions, including allergies, feel very well supported. Staff have

good levels of knowledge and this ensures that parents trust staff. As one parent noted, 'It felt like leaving my child with another mum'.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I evaluated: how well staff identify children who may have SEN and/or disabilities; how effective is the additional support for children's language and communication skills, including for those children who are disadvantaged; the progress of children who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those with social and communication difficulties.
- Staff get to know the youngest children very well. Relationships between two-year-olds and their key persons are strong. As a result, staff are very effective in identifying what children know and can do. Children who have SEN and/or disabilities are identified swiftly. Parents value the work that the Nursery does in this regard. As one parent comments, 'My son's teacher and key worker raised concerns about his development in a sensitive way and the school has ensured that he gets the appropriate assessment and support that he needs at an early stage.'
- Children who start Nursery with language and communication skills that are below those one would typically find make strong progress. Leaders use additional early years pupil premium funding to employ staff who have specialist knowledge and skills. As a result, children, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit from carefully structured support for both their expressive and receptive language.
- Leaders have ensured that all adults are confident to use a range of communication systems, including Makaton and picture exchange systems. Staff are consistent in their use of these systems when working with children inside, outside and at lunchtime. Lunchtimes are well managed. The very youngest children are well supported and cared for. Leaders recognise that older children could do more for themselves at lunchtime, in order to become even more independent.
- Children who have SEN and/or disabilities are very well supported, both in the Nursery classes and in the smaller specialist class. Staff are highly knowledgeable. They are consistent in their use of visual cues to help children move from one activity to another. Staff have high expectations of children and communicate these sensitively and clearly. Some children require significant support to focus their attention or eye gaze. Staff are well trained and have a range of strategies to help children to join in and access the experiences they offer.
- Staff know and understand the wide range of needs that children have. Staff work very closely and effectively with a wide range of professionals, such as speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and occupational therapists. As a result, children have well-thought-out individual plans and make strong progress.
- Parents are true partners at Lanterns. The governors have been hugely successful in retaining services that support parents, including those who have

children who have SEN and/or disabilities. As one parent explains: 'The team are responsive, caring, knowledgeable and professional at all times. The support I receive as a parent of a child with special needs has been exceptional.'

- Nursery staff's assessments of children's learning have become much more effective over the last two years. Leaders have helped staff to avoid taking photographs for the sake of taking photographs. Staff are much more insightful about when something a child does or says is significant. However, leaders are ambitious and think this work can be even better. A few staff are being supported to make the best use of the assessment information to plan children's next steps in learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff maximise the opportunities that lunchtimes present to develop children's independence even more
- all staff make the best use of assessment information in order to plan children's next steps in 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 Hampshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Cole
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and governors to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I accompanied senior leaders to all classes. We evaluated a range of information regarding children's progress. I spoke to a representative of the local authority and children around the school. I scrutinised 37 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and free-text comments. I met some parents during the day. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment.