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Mrs Kay Burke  
Headteacher  
Whitegate Nursery School  
Victoria Road  
Padiham  
Burnley  
Lancashire  
BB12 8TG

Dear Mrs Burke

### **Short inspection of Whitegate Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 October 2012.

#### **This school continues to be outstanding.**

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is the third occasion that your school has been graded outstanding. The whole school community should be exceptionally proud of this achievement.

Through your inspirational leadership, you have made sure that the outstanding provision and highest outcomes have been maintained. You, and all of your staff, are relentless in the pursuit of excellence. Every effort is made to ensure that each child achieves to their very best while at Whitegate Nursery School.

You never stand still and, working with your staff, are always looking for ways to continually improve. For example, to meet the needs of specific children, you and your staff are involved in research projects centring on autistic spectrum disorder and mastery in mathematics. To help children manage their feelings and behaviour more effectively your staff team is training in techniques to support conflict resolution.

Working with others is a strength of your school. For example, you have devised training materials, in conjunction with other nursery schools in Burnley, to support Reception class teachers, staff in private day nurseries and childminders in the delivery of the early years curriculum. Alongside Pen Green Children Centre you are involved in a project to help parents develop their skills to support their children's

learning at home.

You have forged a very tight partnership with parents. Many that I spoke to told me that they are 'astounded' at the progress that their children are making. They find all of your staff exceptionally warm and welcoming. They value highly the close and nurturing relationships that their children have established with their key person. Particularly noteworthy, is the fact that you let children choose their own key person.

You have a highly skilled and talented staff team. Staff hold you in the highest regard and are very proud to work alongside you. They greatly appreciate the support and encouragement that you give them to develop their roles in education. They feel valued and morale is exceptionally high.

The quality of the learning environment is, quite simply, breathtaking. Activities are planned with precision and totally encompass children's interests. Learning is magical and fun. Consequently, children are very keen to learn. Resources are of the highest quality and within easy reach of the children. This allows children to make free choices and become independent learners. Visual timetables are displayed to support children with their learning. In addition, video screens are positioned outside classrooms, giving parents an appreciation of what and how their children are learning.

All groups of children, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and are disadvantaged, make exceptional progress. However, you are not complacent and are currently exploring ways of driving outcomes in reading to an even higher level. Children are very confident and self-assured. Behaviour is impeccable and squabbles are rare because children are so busy.

The curriculum is enriched further by a varied range of trips and visitors, who include artists, and musicians playing African drums. Everyone is welcome at your school and each child is treated as a unique individual. Children are becoming aware of different faiths and cultures through a range of meaningful experiences. Links with other schools, which have a high proportion of children from different minority ethnic backgrounds, give children a greater appreciation of the diversity of the world in which they live.

The school's website provides parents with a good range of high-quality information about the school. Information available includes the school's plans for improvement, attendance figures, online safety, assessment data and details of the early years curriculum.

Following the last inspection, the school was asked to ensure that the governing body was more knowledgeable about the quality of teaching within the school and the progress that different groups were making. The governing body has been recently reconstituted and a few governors are new to their roles. From my discussions, it is very clear that governors are as passionate about the school as you and your staff are. They are very proud of your achievements and are regular

visitors to the school. Governors are aware of the school's many strengths and priorities for development. From the detailed information you provide, they have a good understanding relating to the quality of teaching in the school and the progress that groups of pupils are making. They are not afraid to ask you difficult questions. Governors keep a close eye on the budget to ensure that the school remains sustainable.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Keeping children safe is a central part of the school's work. You have achieved the right balance of ensuring that children are safe while also helping them become independent, resilient and not afraid to take risks. Your staff have a secure understanding of the indicators of abuse or neglect and procedures to follow. They are very aware that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that anyone can make a referral should they be concerned about a child's welfare. Staff talk with confidence about the latest national concerns of female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation and radicalisation. All safeguarding training is up to date and staff are familiar with part one of 'Keeping children safe in education'. Those with responsibility for safeguarding and recruitment have completed training at the appropriate level. There are comprehensive procedures in place for the recruitment and selection of staff. No one is allowed to start working at the school until all relevant checks have been completed.

The school site is safe and secure. Visitors' credentials are checked closely on arrival. Video cameras are in place throughout the building and classrooms are only accessible via key fobs.

### **Inspection findings**

- The proportion of children who have SEN and/or disabilities has increased considerably in recent years. Some of these children have complex needs. Consequently, a greater proportion of children are now starting at the Nursery with knowledge and skills that are significantly below those typical for their age. From their different starting points, all groups of children excel and achieve very well. However, from your detailed analysis of the data, you are keen to take outcomes in reading to an even higher level. You, and your staff, have identified that more opportunities need to be made available to encourage children to make up and tell their own stories. In addition, we also both agree that even more could be done to the learning environment to foster and nurture children's love of reading.
- Through rigorous monitoring, you have ensured that the quality of teaching is of the highest standard. All of your staff are reflective practitioners who never rest on their laurels. Complacency is not an option. Staff have an excellent understanding of the underlying principles of early years education. They use questioning exceptionally well to probe and deepen children's learning. Staff are also highly skilled at knowing when to stand back to let children work things out for themselves and when to intervene.
- A wide range of training opportunities, which are linked to school priorities, are

available to all staff. This ensures that they have the knowledge and skills to give children a first-class start to their education. Staff also have regular opportunities to observe each other and practice in local schools to ensure that they learn from the best.

- Transition arrangements into the nursery and onwards to primary school are very effective. Parents are offered a home visit and arrangements to settle children into the nursery are personalised to the needs of each child. The nursery has developed close links with its main feeder primary schools. Staff meet regularly with Reception teachers and assessment data is shared. Children also make frequent visits throughout the year to their new school. As a result, they are familiar with their new surroundings and staff at the start of the next stage of their education.
- Very good use is made of the early years pupil premium funding to ensure that this group of children flourish. The proportion of children entitled to this funding is now much higher than in previous years. All staff have a very good understanding of the challenges that this group of children face. The money is allocated to ensure that these children receive very good levels of support, both academically and socially. Disadvantaged children perform as well as, and at times better than, their peers. Such highly effective practice demonstrates the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- opportunities for children to make up and tell their own stories are increased and that outcomes in reading improve even further.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, staff, governors and parents. I held a telephone call with a representative from the local authority. We went on a tour of the school to see the learning that was taking place. I looked at some examples of children's work and observed children's behaviour in class. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the single central record, the school's tracking system and records relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning. I also took account of the responses to Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire, completed by eight

parents.