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Mrs Natacha Yuen
Acting Headteacher
Hartcliffe Nursery School and Children's Centre
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Dear Mrs Yuen

Short inspection of Hartcliffe Nursery School and Children's Centre

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2018, 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 nursery school was judged to be outstanding in October 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the nursery school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of outstanding as a result of this inspection.**

Together with your acting deputy headteacher, you have demonstrated strong and determined leadership during an unsettled period. You have dealt effectively with urgent priorities and are systematically rectifying and developing those areas that need improvement. You and your acting deputy headteacher have an accurate understanding of the nursery school's effectiveness and there is a clear plan for the next steps in the journey of improvement.

The teaching and non-teaching staff report that you and your acting deputy headteacher have successfully bound them together as a team. Although roles of responsibility are in the very early stages of development, staff appreciate the way in which leaders have introduced a more delegated approach to the management structure. This has helped them to feel more confident in their work. Consequently, staff morale has significantly improved. One member of staff summed up the views of her colleagues by comparing the unsettled period in the nursery school to 'a choppy sea' which is 'now calm'.

You and your acting deputy headteacher have been actively extending links with two local nursery schools. This is enabling you to share and moderate the detailed assessments you make on the progress of your children. Transition to the adjacent primary school has also improved significantly. There are now more opportunities

available for staff to settle the children as they move into Reception, and to discuss their individual needs with their colleagues in the primary school.

The high turnover of governors, and a lack of accessible information, limited the amount of challenge and support that governors provided to the nursery's leaders. Following an audit of skills and having undertaken training, current governors are developing a better understanding of their role in being accountable for the school's effectiveness. However, as yet, they have not secured its permanent leadership and management.

Safeguarding is effective.

Nursery staff and governors ensure that the safety of the children and their families is paramount. Arrangements are secure and all children are kept safe. You have updated policies and procedures recently and refreshed safeguarding training for staff. Two governors have recently undertaken safer-recruitment training to support them to be rigorous when checking potential employees.

Your new system for staff to record safeguarding concerns enables you to have a consistent and clear understanding of the needs of children who attend the nursery and their families. You use this information well to support individual needs and to share concerns and update external agencies as appropriate. As an integral part of the Hartcliffe Children's Centre, you work very closely with the family support service to ensure that your families are safeguarded.

Your recent changes to the sessions times are better suiting the needs of the parents, particularly those who are in or seeking employment. This is helping to reduce absence, which you recognise as a potential safeguarding concern. You make sure that parents are immediately contacted when a child does not turn up for their allocated session.

You have also made effective use of early years additional funding to provide the full-time children with a freshly prepared and nutritious school meal. These are very popular with the children and encourage regular attendance.

Inspection findings

- Parents are very happy with all aspects of the nursery school provision. In particular, they praise the way that their children are well looked after and cared for. They appreciate the approachability of the staff and the family feel of the nursery school. As one parent pointed out, 'nothing is ever too much trouble' for the staff. Parents and carers recognise that their children progress well. The views of those parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire can be summed up by one who explained that 'all members of the team provide a wonderful atmosphere and work tirelessly to accommodate the needs of both children and parents'.
- When parental concerns arise, you and your acting deputy headteacher deal with the issues immediately. You take the required action and accurately record all

details for future reference.

- We discussed the nursery school's involvement in a local project which is successfully raising the attainment of boys. Active recruitment of both male and female members of staff and the introduction of a 'fathers group' have been increasing the aspirations of boys. Teaching staff carefully plan activities that are not gender-biased. They make detailed observations of how boys learn, which helps the teaching staff prepare for their next learning steps.
- We also talked about the very poor levels of the children's speech. You highlighted that, since the withdrawal of speech and language support for the nursery school, this has become an increasing barrier to children's progress. Your teaching staff have undertaken training to encourage the children to develop their speaking skills. We watched a group of children interacting well together when they were asked to say 'hello' to their classmates. Another group developed their speech when they counted the number of milk cartons available to drink. Nevertheless, you agreed that there are missed opportunities for teaching staff to encourage the children to express themselves fully. For example, children are not encouraged to say 'please' or 'thank you' when they receive their snacks from adults.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they secure permanent leadership for the nursery school so that those leaders with posts of responsibility can further develop delegation and extend the roles of responsibility for other staff
- they improve the children's speaking and social skills by ensuring that teaching staff have high expectations of how children should respond to them, for example during snack times
- governors challenge and support leaders appropriately, by developing a deeper understanding of their role and the information they need to carry it out.

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

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the acting deputy headteacher to discuss the nursery school's effectiveness. I had discussions with governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with all staff and had a telephone conversation with a local authority officer. We visited the classrooms together and observed

teaching and learning. We examined documents, including information about the safeguarding of children and the progress that they make in their learning. We also discussed the school's self-evaluation document and improvement plan. I considered 12 responses to Parent View and 11 free-text comments. I made myself available to parents when they arrived for the afternoon session.