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Miss Julia Mann
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Mann

Short inspection of Gloucester Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 20 February 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 school was judged to be outstanding in November 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

You provide outstanding and inspirational leadership. There has been no complacency and all staff share your vision to drive new initiatives forward to make sure that every child achieves as well as they can. You and your staff value the individual child and know each child's needs and interests well. You all also fully support each child's family by working closely in partnership with parents and carers.

The characteristics of the school population have changed since the last inspection. There are now more than 11 languages represented at the school. Nearly a third of children speak English as an additional language, many of whom have little or no English when they join the school. You have arranged either bilingual or additional language support for these children, who make at least good, and often very rapid, progress as a result. The proportion of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has also increased. Good links with external professionals and support agencies, as well as working closely with parents, help these children to make the best progress they can. You adapt the learning and the timetable for each child to meet their individual needs.

Parents are unanimous in their praise for the school. They told me how much their children love coming to school. Parents value the wide range of learning activities that are offered to the children and the excellent relationships that they have with the

staff. One parent summed up the views of many with the comment: 'This is one of the best nursery settings I have ever witnessed and I am so happy for my son to spend his days here. We couldn't be happier.'

Safeguarding is effective

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong understanding of safeguarding across the school. Children's well-being is carefully monitored and all staff take responsibility for ensuring that children are secure and happy. A comprehensive and detailed recording system is in place. Staff are vigilant and record any concerns that they may have. These are always discussed by senior leaders. Frequent checks are made to make sure that referrals are followed up in a timely manner so that families get the support that they need. Governors thoroughly monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. They have made some useful recommendations to senior leaders as a result of their checks.

All staff attend regular training to keep them as up to date as possible about how to keep children safe. Risk assessments are in place for activities where children might hurt themselves. However, there is still suitable challenge for the children. For example, they learn to use simple tools, such as saws and hand drills, safely. In the outdoor areas, where they can run, climb, slide and ride, as well as experiment with large pulley systems, they learn how to manage risks.

Inspection findings

- The school has built successfully on the many strengths identified at the last inspection. In the inspection report, you were asked to improve the way that children were helped to evaluate their own learning and plan what they would like to do next. This has now become part of practice throughout the school. Adults supporting children's learning regularly talk to the children about what they are doing and guide them to make improvements. Many activities also incorporate discussions about what children would like to learn next. For example, three-year-old children (in G3) were supported to make pizzas. They sliced and chopped the ingredients, including mushrooms and peppers. Discussions with each child about what they would like to cook next helped staff to plan the next cookery session.
- Since the last inspection, you have expanded the school to include two-year-old children (in G2). This initially proved to be a challenge for staff and you were concerned that the teaching for the two-year-olds was not as effective as that for the three-year-olds. You continually supported your staff to improve through discussion and feedback. Jointly, you refined the teaching and learning activities until you were satisfied that all the children in the school received the same high-quality education.
- The children start school with skills that vary considerably between cohorts and individuals. Many start with skills below and well below those typical for their age. Only about a quarter of three-year-old children have previously attended as two-year-olds. Most children make at least good progress, with a significant proportion making rapid progress across all areas of learning. Children in G3 become increasingly confident in breaking down words into syllables. They use their

knowledge of sounds in speaking and mark-making activities. Many use numbers confidently. For example, one girl decided to count to 30 (mainly accurately) while holding the string onto her model, so that she could be sure that the glue had a long enough time to stick.

- Staff are very adept at knowing what to do to help children to develop the skills and attitudes they need to make friends and to get on well with others. They model good manners and behaviour, and praise children who share, take turns and care for others. Small and larger group sessions demonstrate that the children become increasingly proficient at listening to each other and waiting for their turn. Many staff are particularly skilled at supporting children who are in the early stages of managing their own feelings and emotions.
- The school's carefully planned curriculum makes a considerable contribution to children's outstanding achievements. As well as the school core curriculum, children have plenty of opportunities to listen to stories and explore books, to practise mark-making and early writing and to use their knowledge of number and shape. Children regularly visit woodland areas, shop in the local community, grow their own fruit and vegetables (which are eaten at snack time) and work with specialists such as artists. Children usually become absorbed in learning and are guided by adults to make their own decisions and find solutions when they encounter a problem. As a result, the vast majority of children work confidently on their own. Parents support the homework opportunities by undertaking joint activities with their children. The three-dimensional models which formed part of recent homework on shape were on display during the inspection and demonstrated an impressive range of ideas.
- Staff make evaluations about children's achievements in all areas of learning. Most members of staff use the information they gather very effectively to plan the next steps in children's learning. However, a few are not linking these evaluations well enough to the curriculum in order to build on what children already know and can do. Some staff would benefit from additional guidance to plan the next steps in learning for the children to make sure that they continue to make rapid progress.
- Arrangements to help the children to move from one age group to the next within the school are excellent. Our observations of two-year-olds through to the older three-year-olds illustrated very clearly the increase in challenge in the learning activities set for the children. It was also clear how well staff modified activities to match the differing needs of groups and individuals. Staff working with the youngest children were developing children's responses to simple instructions. In the Nurture Nest, children were beginning to work cooperatively and to share equipment. The oldest children were being encouraged to use more complex language.
- The arrangements you make when children are ready to move to primary school are also excellent. Each child is extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education. The children move to a very large number of primary schools and a number of the parents commented on how well supported they felt when your staff accompanied some of them on visits. Feedback from a number of those settings shows that your evaluations of learning are considered accurate, your children

thrive and the additional information provided for your children is particularly useful to the Reception teachers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff make full use of the evaluations they make about children's learning to plan activities that build on what children already know and are able to do and that are closely linked to the school's curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Angela Kirk
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you throughout the day and discussed the lines of enquiry. I also spoke with the chair of the governing body and your senior management team. I considered the responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and any free-text comments and met parents as they dropped off their children. I scrutinised the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. We visited all the different teaching areas a number of times, where I spoke with many children informally, and we discussed many samples and photographs of children's work. I viewed a number of documents, including the school's plans for improvement, governors' monitoring visit reports, the minutes from their meetings and staff plans for children's learning. I evaluated a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding, and examined the school's website to check that it meets the requirements for the publication of specific information.