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Miss Simone O'Connor  
Headteacher  
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Lancashire  
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Dear Miss O'Connor

### **Short inspection of McMillan Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 September 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.

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 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.**

During this inspection, I observed children engaging well in the many activities provided to develop, for example, their speaking, counting, reading and writing skills. Children at the school are happy and behave very positively. New children settle easily into school routines and expectations because of the sensitive support from staff. Parents and carers say that the school adapts teaching to the needs of individual children and I agree. Parents are pleased with their children's good and better progress. Nevertheless, leaders and governors have not made sure that the school's website explains the curriculum fully for parents.

Leaders are realistic and honest in their reviews of the school's work. For example, they recognise that over the past year, some teaching, learning and assessment has not matched the very best in the school. Leaders are taking a range of steps to further refine the quality of teaching. Leaders make good use of experts from outside of the school to support their work. However, governors do not have enough understanding about the learning and the priorities for the school arising from these links. This limits the extent to which they can hold leaders to account for the impact of this work.

Leaders identified accurately that in 2017/18, children continued to learn and progress well at McMillan Nursery School but that their achievement was less strong

in their understanding of people and communities. Leaders and staff are taking a range of thoughtful actions to improve children's learning in these aspects of the curriculum, but it is too soon to see the full impact. Your new arrangements to summarise the achievement of children are too complex. This makes it difficult for leaders to review and plan to improve the progress of different groups of children.

At the previous inspection, inspectors recommended that the school raise children's achievement by improving their attendance at school. Staff and leaders now promote and review children's attendance at school much more carefully. There is clear evidence that for some of the most vulnerable children, their attendance improves quickly because of the work of school staff. However, some parents continue to take holidays during term time. This means that the overall level of children's attendance is not as high as it should be to ensure that children gain the most from their time at McMillan Nursery School.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders understand the main risks in the local community to the safety and well-being of children and families. They are clear how the school responds to these local issues. For example, staff help parents to recognise the risks to children that can cause burns or scalds. Leaders make sure that staff have regular training about national and local safeguarding issues. For example, staff are fully up to date with the latest changes to the government's guidance 'Keeping children safe in education'. Leaders and staff keep the school site secure. Children's excellent behaviour shows that they feel safe at school. Staff keep a close check on how children feel about themselves and their lives, so that extra help is given to those children who need it. Leaders make sure that relevant safeguarding information is shared with other professionals, as necessary.

### **Inspection findings**

- Children grow quickly in their independence, curiosity and confidence because staff give them skilful support in group activities and in their play. Staff have high expectations of children. They encourage children to try hard and persist when tasks are difficult. This support, for example, helps children learn to put on their own shoes and waterproof clothing. Children, including those who speak English as an additional language, are becoming more confident to talk and communicate with one another and adults. Staff set clear expectations for children's behaviour and children show much self-control. Parents say that the school adapts activities fully to include children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents say that their children flourish because of the work of their child's individual key person, as well as the headteacher.
- Children make much progress from their starting points. However, in 2017/18 they achieved less strongly in their understanding of the world. This was because of variability in the work of staff. Leaders are taking clear steps to improve the quality of teaching but it is too early to see the full impact of this work. Children experience a broad range of valuable learning activities at the school. However, the school website does not explain the curriculum well for parents.

- Leaders and governors focus their attention on the areas of learning where children's overall achievement is weakest. Leaders have introduced new arrangements to summarise the attainment and progress of children. However, the amount of information that leaders gather is too detailed. It is difficult for leaders to be precise when comparing the progress of different groups of children. As a result, some information in leaders' plans for improvement is unclear.
- Leaders have made sure that in a period of many changes of staffing at the school, children continue to achieve well. For example, children learn rapidly to coordinate their running, climbing and jumping skills, as well as their ability to control a pencil or paintbrush. Leaders make full use of the expertise of the local authority and other schools to strengthen their work. Governors are aware of leaders' links with experts from outside of the school but not about the priorities that emerge, nor the benefits to McMillan Nursery School.
- Despite some successful work by staff and leaders to improve children's attendance, not all parents bring children to school as much as they should. This is still a priority for improvement.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- summaries of children's attainment and progress provide a more helpful overview with which to inform plans for improvement
- governors have a more detailed overview of the priorities set for leaders' links with experts from outside of the school and the impact of this work on the quality of the school
- parents bring their children to school more regularly
- information on the school's website explains the curriculum fully for parents.

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

Tim Vaughan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you and other leaders. You and I observed children's learning indoors and outdoors. I spoke with some staff as they worked. I looked at a sample of records of children's learning and school information about children's attainment and progress. I spoke informally with some parents. There were no responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey or staff survey to consider. I reviewed information from a recent school survey of parents' views of the school. I met with two representatives of the local authority. I met with the chair of the governing body and one other governor. I reviewed the school's records of checks on the suitability of staff and governors to work with children.