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Ms Mary Ellinger  
Headteacher  
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East Sussex  
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Dear Ms Ellinger

### **Short inspection of Royal Spa Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 November 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 June 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since you joined the school three years ago, the provision has expanded to include provision for two-year-olds.

There is a culture of care and kindness throughout the school. The learning environment both indoors and outside is a wonderland of activities waiting to entice children to use their curiosity to learn. High-quality resources are organised so that children learn to be independent. Children thrive, and are growing in confidence and self-esteem.

Wherever you look, children are learning in this school and there is a great sense of fun. All children learn to behave exceptionally well, to work independently, and to share resources and play fairly. Adults act as excellent role models for the children in how to behave and get along with one another. They become as excited in teaching as children do in learning because they all love what they do. Adults are very skilful at facilitating and, where appropriate, leading this learning. It is a supportive environment, where children learn from each other and from adults. Your strong leadership has ensured that adults skilfully develop children's language and vocabulary through engaging conversation.

You keep a careful track of how well children achieve, and you identify any children who need additional support. You make sure that the staff have the right skills and training to deliver this support to ensure that children make good progress. This includes work with the children who enter with delayed speech and language skills

and with the many children who speak English as an additional language. Adults are skilled users of Makaton sign language, using it to reinforce their work with these children. Individual and small group work delivered by the special education needs coordinator ensures that tailored support is provided for children who are identified early as possibly having special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, all children make rapid and accelerated progress during their time at Nursery from their respective starting points. However, you quite rightly recognise that outcomes in reading could be even better. To address this, you have engaged with two projects targeted at raising standards in early reading. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this work.

Leaders' work to engage with families is a strength of the school. You recognise the value of a mutually supportive partnership between home and school and ensure that you maintain strong relationships with parents through excellent communication. Parents are tremendously positive about the school and 100% of those who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, would recommend it to others. The comments of one parent exemplifies that of others: 'In my opinion Royal Spa is everything a nursery should be: safe, welcoming, caring, educational and fun. Due to the attentiveness and warmth of the staff, my daughter settled into nursery and is excited to go in each day.'

You have ensured that the area for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection has been tackled rigorously. Leaders were challenged to further strengthen the partnerships with local schools and settings and those farther afield. You have embraced this challenge. You have joined the Brighton City Partnership for education and the South Coast Teaching School Alliance. You work with the local authority to advise them on early years education, and you sit on the strategic board within the local council. You work very closely with private voluntary and independent nurseries and lecture at the university to raise standards in early years education. These partnerships have ensured that you are able to continue to develop and share high-quality practice within and beyond the school.

The leadership of the governing body has recently undergone significant changes, including a chair and vice-chair who are both new to their roles. You are fully aware that these new leaders need to gain a precise understanding of their roles and need to receive appropriate training.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Stringent checks are made on all adults who come into contact with children. The school gives good attention to a range of risk assessments to keep pupils and staff safe. Governors are very aware of their role in promoting safeguarding. They make the necessary checks on leaders' work to ensure that children are kept safe.

You know your children and their families very well, and you are especially vigilant with families that are potentially vulnerable. You are relentless in securing the

services that children and families may need. All staff are quick to share concerns with those responsible for safeguarding. Any slight concern is quickly and appropriately reported, investigated and kept under review. Records are kept and stored securely. Parents are confident that that you do everything possible to keep their children safe, happy and healthy.

## **Inspection findings**

- My first focus during the inspection was to evaluate the capacity of the leadership team to sustain the outstanding quality of education seen during the previous inspection. You and your team are rigorous and relentless in your ongoing evaluation of the provision. This means that staff receive the right guidance and training to enhance their skills and to continually improve the learning provision.
- The outstanding curriculum plays an important role in ensuring children's good progress because it captures their imaginations. Throughout the day, children were fully absorbed by the wide range of interesting experiences. Younger children were fascinated by the unexpected arrival of a spider and studied it with interest. The older children thoughtfully discussed and explored a range of activities involving The Gingerbread Man story. This included cutting out shapes from playdough with the colour and smell of ginger, working out how to keep the gingerbread man out of the water using construction toys and also jumping across the stepping stones outdoors to stay out of the water.
- Progress made by almost all children is exceptional. The majority leave with attainment at least at age-related expectations and a good proportion leave with attainment that is above age-related expectations. As a result of teachers' high expectations and through regular practice, all children improve their communication and language ability, which in turn helps support their reading and writing development. Staff ensure that learning environments foster children's love of reading by extending experiences of the text across the provision. You also encourage parents to take a more active part in developing their children's reading skills at home and share book reading skills in regular workshops. Last year, however, outcomes for children at or above the typical level in reading were lower than in all other areas of learning.
- My second focus for the inspection was to evaluate how practitioners help children who are in receipt of additional funding to make good progress from their various starting points when they enter the nursery. The early years pupil premium is effectively spent on additional staffing or extended hours. As a result, individual barriers to learning are minimised and these children make the same or better progress from their different starting points as their peers. Last year, the vast majority of children, including disadvantaged children, reached the expected level of development in all areas of learning, including in communication and language, despite some children having very low levels of ability on entry.
- My final focus was to evaluate how leaders, including governors, ensure the best possible provision for all. Equality values form the essence of the entire school community, and you offer many opportunities for these values to be celebrated, including a lantern walk for Refugee week, Diwali celebrations and a carol service for the local community. As a Nursery of Sanctuary, within the School of

Sanctuary scheme, leaders help children, staff and the wider community understand what it means to be seeking sanctuary and to extend a welcome to everyone as equal, valued members of the school community. You are proud to be a place of safety and inclusion for all.

- Governors check their understanding of school effectiveness for themselves through using data effectively, meeting with staff and visiting the school. There are designated governors with responsibility for specific areas of the school's work who report their findings to the governing body. The change of roles within the governing body has not affected governors' ability to hold leaders to account successfully, and they continue to be very knowledgeable about the school. The previous chair of governors will remain on the board for a short time to hand over her wealth of knowledge and understanding. Training with the local authority is being undertaken by the new chair.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- reading projects are carefully monitored and evaluated for their effectiveness and impact
- governors new to role are fully trained and prepared for leadership of the governing body.

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

Yours sincerely

Marcia Goodwin  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I held meetings with you and your senior leaders. I met with parents informally as they arrived at school with their children. I met with the current and previous chairs of the governing body. I spoke with the local authority school improvement partner by telephone. I visited all of the learning environments with senior leaders, spoke to children and looked at the activities indoors and outdoors. I considered the 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and nine responses to the staff survey. I reviewed a range of documentation related to safeguarding, improvement planning, governance, early years pupil premium and assessments of children's skills and understanding.