

3 December 2018

Mrs Donna Harwood-Duffy  
Executive Headteacher  
Chertsey Nursery School  
Pycroft Road  
Chertsey  
Surrey  
KT16 9ER

Dear Mrs Harwood-Duffy

### **Short inspection of Chertsey Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 good in May 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has withstood a challenging period due to fluctuating and temporary leadership arrangements. Last academic year, following the retirement of the previous interim headteacher, the local authority brokered additional support from the Bourne Education Trust. This arrangement was temporary and included some support from two local headteachers. After several years without substantive leadership in place, strategic direction and vision were held back. Responsible stakeholders candidly describe how the quality of provision had simply 'stood still'.

In September 2018, the school forged a more formal, helpful and permanent partnership with Dorking Nursery School. This has acted as 'a breath of fresh air', rejuvenating everyone's efforts. Consequently, both maintained nursery schools now work closely together, sharing your expertise as executive headteacher, as well as sharing a bursar and some governors. At the same time, you appointed a new and permanent head of school. Expertise at all levels has strengthened considerably and triggered greater energy and purpose. For example, governors and staff are now more assured about the school's future, and staff are committing well to developing their expertise.

You know the school well, having previously provided leadership support on behalf of the local authority in your role as a national leader of education. Being so familiar with the school means that your evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate and comprehensive. As a result, this year, all stakeholders hold greater clarity about

what needs to be achieved in order to raise standards further. You are ambitious in your intent. For example, you know that more children could achieve even higher standards, particularly in reading and number. Work to further improve the school is well underway and already making a very positive difference.

Parents are very complimentary about their children's experience in the Nursery. They appreciate the care of staff and say that their children look forward to attending. This was highly evident during the inspection. The school is rightly held in high regard by parents and carers, staff and children alike. One parent noted:

'This is such a lovely pre-school... The teachers encourage [my daughter's] learning at her pace and we have seen so much development in her in all areas of learning. The staff are very friendly and make an effort to say hello by name to all the children. It's such a lovely environment to be in.'

Areas for improvement identified at your previous inspection have been addressed. First, at the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Approximately three quarters of the school's current staff have joined the school since it was last inspected. From the word go, leaders have established a rigorous cycle of monitoring of teaching and learning. Staff are responding well. With the support of an adviser, some aspects of teaching have strengthened quickly. For example, adults' modelling of language and use of questioning is highly effective. Nevertheless, staff are not yet so confident when using assessment information to plan activities at just the right pitch.

Second, the school was asked to provide more opportunities for children to read, write and learn number skills in the outdoor area. You have ensured that the outdoor area is an enabling environment. Outdoor planned activities cover all areas of learning. During the inspection, staff capably initiated children's learning, linking tasks well to familiar rhymes and stories. Further outdoor developments are planned and feature strongly in the school's improvement plan. For example, an area has been identified as a 'forest school'. Training for staff is underway.

New governors add impressive expertise and are highly committed to providing top-class education to young children in the locality. Already they are exerting a very positive influence. Nevertheless, the collective impact of all governors on further improving the school is at an early stage.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders ensure that all staff are fully versed on safeguarding matters. The school's safeguarding policy meets the latest requirements, including those relating to 'Keeping children safe in education 2018'. For example, leaders have been quick to ensure that the new requirement to protect children from sexual harassment is fully considered at an age-appropriate level. All aspects of the guidance are fully considered, and the policy acts as an informative reference point for staff.

You, together with the head of school, have rightly prioritised staff training as this

has been a weaker aspect in the past. All staff, including the school's designated safeguarding leads (DSLs), have received appropriate safeguarding training. Leaders have ensured that the school's programme of training is well matched to development priorities. Consequently, many staff are imminently due to receive paediatric first aid training, and for some staff, fire-warden training. This is helpful. Staff and parents unanimously agree that children are kept safe.

Staff report concerns about children appropriately. The school's DSL keeps close oversight and appropriately involves external agencies when required. Nevertheless, record-keeping is a work in progress. You are clear that documenting the school's actions more systematically will strengthen this aspect.

### **Inspection findings**

- Since the previous inspection, both leadership and staffing structures have been overhauled. You have prioritised staff development and got off to a positive start, meeting all staff on a one-to-one basis. Staff are appreciative of this. Now, more robust performance objectives have been set for the year ahead and staff job descriptions reviewed appropriately. The local authority is justifiably confident that this year 'staff initiative, responsibility and accountability' will rightly develop more strongly than was evident in the past.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is impressive. You have already made helpful comparisons between the achievement of children at Chertsey compared to those in other maintained nursery schools in Surrey. This has been useful and is leading to well-targeted improvement actions that demonstrate your exacting approach.
- Children love coming to Chertsey Nursery School. They, including children who attend the resource provision, display high levels of confidence and security when undertaking their day-to-day activities. Adults are adept at promoting children's independence, doing so gently and thoughtfully. For example, as children arrive they confidently self-register by posting their name card through the class letter box. Staff are quick to offer praise in such moments.
- Children are given access to a wide range of reading materials. The youngest pupils sit attentively, turn pages, and engage in story-telling activities. Rhyme and song are used to good effect. Children respond well to adult-led activities, and staff gently nurture the youngest learners so that they develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves.
- Children follow instructions sensibly. They know where things belong and how to hang up their coats and put their toys away. This learning environment, including the expansive outdoors area, is well organised. Resources are clearly labelled. Consequently, even the youngest children know where to find equipment when making choices.
- Children's personal, social and emotional development is promoted strongly. There are few disagreements, and children play happily alongside one another. Children settle quickly and have very warm and positive relationships with adults.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's actions relating to concerns about children are documented methodically
- the effectiveness of governors continues to strengthen so that school leaders are well supported in promoting school development
- adults make better use of assessment information to inform their planning so as to promote children's rapid progress in some aspects of learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and the head of school, three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative from Babcock educational services on behalf of the local authority. Together with you and the head of school, I observed the morning session and visited the resource base. I took account of 18 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 11 free-text comments, and spoke to parents as they arrived at the morning session. I considered 12 responses to the online survey for staff. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about children's achievement, the school improvement plan, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.