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Mrs Carole Jacques  
Headteacher  
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Norfolk  
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Dear Mrs Jacques

### **Short inspection of Earlham Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 December 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 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 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.**

Since the previous inspection, there have been some significant changes to the leadership and structure at Earlham Nursery School. You took up your post in September 2016 and a new chair of the governing body has been in place since July 2018.

In April 2018, you opened a separate complex needs class to provide suitable education to children for whom a mainstream setting may not adequately meet their needs. You provide education for many disadvantaged children who are in receipt of the early years pupil premium or for whom the government funds additional hours.

Earlham Nursery school continues to be a very happy school, where children are cared for and well looked after. Children have very good relationships with adults and particularly their individual key workers. Pastoral care was judged to be a strength at the previous inspection and this remains the case. One parent exemplified the view of others, saying, 'My son is very happy and has developed positive relationships with the staff and children in his class.' Children's social and emotional development is very well catered for.

Staff are overwhelmingly proud to work at the school and acknowledge that leaders

provide them with appropriate and useful ongoing training and development. All parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that the school is well led and managed.

Leaders go to great lengths to ensure that children's well-being and personal development are comprehensively provided for. Children are enthusiastic and make the most of the rich additional experiences that they receive. For example, children enjoy the visits to the local residential home where they have developed effective relationships with members of the wider community.

You continue to consider ways in which to improve the provision for the children in your care. This year, through the introduction of the complex needs class, you are ensuring that the most vulnerable children are provided with meaningful experiences to help them thrive. Parents speak warmly about how well teachers understand their children's behavioural and emotional needs.

This year, you and other leaders have rightly focused on developing the curriculum, educational experiences and progress that children of all ages can make. You have an accurate view of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. You and other leaders know where the school needs to improve to ensure that more children are academically ready to start school.

The governing body provides you with the necessary support to continue to improve the school. Governors are dedicated to the continuing personal success and achievement of the children and the pastoral support offered to parents. They visit the school often to check the accuracy of the information you provide. Even though governors are diligent in attending meetings, their records are not as sharp as they could be. They do not demonstrate challenge, nor show consistently well how effectively governors follow through on some of their previous actions.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, place a high priority on keeping all children safe and have successfully ensured that Earlham Nursery School is one in which children are safe and very well cared for. Children have a great sense of security. This is clearly evident in the confident and cheerful way they conduct themselves throughout the school day.

Staff are appropriately trained and frequently updated on safeguarding matters. Consequently, staff are well equipped to recognise changes in behaviour, appearance and attitude that may indicate a child is at risk. Adults know what to do to appropriately record concerns and all staff state that children are safe.

Leaders ensure that their work with families, parents and carers is effective. Additional support is thoughtfully provided where families require further help. Leaders maintain strong links with the children's centre, situated on the same site, to provide a safe and accessible place for many families to receive the help and support they require.

Leaders follow through diligently on all aspects of safeguarding concerns, referring to, and working effectively with, outside agencies. However, school records still require further sharpening to be considered well-kept overall. For example, there were some administrative errors found on the school's record for the employment of staff and training records over the course of the inspection. These were easily rectified by the end of the inspection day.

## **Inspection findings**

- My main line of enquiry was to establish how well the curriculum is planned and implemented to meet the needs of different groups of children. As the school provides education for those who are below statutory school age, I wanted to check how well leaders prepare all children academically for school life.
- Recently, you have made several changes to the curriculum and to the organisation of classrooms. Now, all children have access to the same good-quality provision and resources. Displays around the school are vibrant; rooms are well equipped and facilitate a wide range of opportunities for children to develop their skills and abilities. In every room, children are encouraged to develop their early writing and mathematical skills.
- The outdoor area is a strength and enjoyed by many of the children. Over the inspection, I watched children relishing their achievement on the good-quality bikes and scooters available. They play and take turns exceptionally well. The equipment is suitable for all children from two years old. Children's physical development is effectively provided for.
- Similarly, you provide many additional opportunities for children to have experiences of a wide and rich curriculum. Children's creative achievement in art is highly evident. Children often produce work that is above that expected for their age and stage. However, there are fewer opportunities for children to choose creative activities or practise writing outside.
- Children are enthusiastic learners. They participate well in their phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) sessions, enjoying practising their sounds and beginning the early stages of reading. Each room has a well-stocked library with suitable books for children to enjoy. The reading areas are inviting for children to have time and space to learn the enjoyment of reading. You are currently raising the profile of reading in all classes and with parents. Early signs of impact on improving children's interest in books are positive.
- Your assessment information shows that children who are eligible for the early years pupil premium are making good progress from their individual starting points. Additional funds are carefully used to ensure that these children develop the vocabulary skills they need to be school ready.
- However, teachers do not use assessment information as well as they could to plan for the most able children to make good progress across all areas of learning. In some classes, adults ask questions to help the most able children reason and provide deeper answers. Where this happens the most able children can demonstrate their knowledge and skills well.

- Another line of enquiry which I considered was the suitability of the provision for two-year-olds. You provide for both funded and non-funded places. Children are happy and are provided with the nurture and care they need for their age. The environment is planned well. These children have a separate and inviting place where they can sleep when they want to. Children can also choose to learn in a quieter space in the small classroom or participate in the activities provided in the large class.
- Children enjoy the activities provided and younger two-year-olds persevere with a task they have chosen. For example, one child focused on linking pictures of animals to a toy animal then trying to find the corresponding word. However, adults are not deliberately planning to expand all children's vocabulary through a language-rich curriculum. At times, adults do not use different teaching strategies as well as they could to help children increase their knowledge and understanding of words.
- Finally, I considered the provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Some of these children have very complex needs and are provided with specialist and skilled education in a separate class. Some of these children in your care have already been excluded or were at risk of exclusion from other mainstream settings. All children have an education, health and care plan; the local authority also requests that you take some children of school age from Reception or Year 1.
- Relationships are strong, and children are learning in a safe and caring environment that has been adapted to suit their needs. You monitor children's attendance well in this class, especially for those who are of school age. Adults provide a skilled and caring provision that is increasingly meeting the specific needs of individuals. Adults are still in the process of developing and adapting individual routines, so each child learns strategies for self-regulation.
- Parents are highly positive about the work in this additional provision. Where there are other children with SEND or medical needs in the main classes their needs are equally well met. Often there is little difference in the provision because children with SEND are fully integrated into daily life at the nursery. Each child is known well, and adults are attentive to their needs.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- adults provide the most able children with more opportunities to make good or better progress from their higher starting points
- adults plan a systematic and language-rich curriculum that helps two-year-old children develop their knowledge and understanding
- children with complex needs are provided with individually adapted strategies to help with self-regulation and independence
- they sharpen recording and monitoring systems, so management records are rigorous and fully reflect the practice found in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Over the course of the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, and two representatives of the governing body to discuss the progress of the school since the previous inspection.

I gathered a wide range of evidence to judge the quality of education. This included short observations of lessons, jointly with you, and the consideration of a range of children's current work found on display. I also observed the teaching of phonics.

I spoke to children informally in classrooms and around the school and listened to adults' interactions with children to determine the quality of relationships. I looked at a range of documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation; plans for future improvement; governors' minutes; and information about attendance and children's achievement.

Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including the mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff, and case studies about referrals made to external agencies.

I took account of 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as informal conversations with parents during the inspection. The views of staff were considered, from the 16 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.