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Mrs Julia Hymers
Headteacher
Tudhoe Moor Nursery School
Tudhoe Moor
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Dear Mrs Hymers

Short inspection of Tudhoe Moor Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 2019, 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 nursery was judged to be good in January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your arrival at the nursery in September 2018, you have correctly identified the key areas for improvement and acted decisively upon these. You effectively involved staff and others in the evaluation of the nursery and therefore everyone feels ownership of this and clearly understands the priorities in the development plan. This could be seen throughout the observations we made, as staff all wove aspects of learning, for example phonics, into everything they did. You have high expectations of the staff and children in your care. For instance, you have introduced a new process for assessing children's achievements, which has brought all the staff together in their understanding. This means there is greater accuracy of where children are, the next steps in their learning and the progress children make. You know that this now needs time to bed down, and for staff to feel even more secure in using it. You have also introduced a new way of teaching phonics and reading. This is having a striking impact on children's literacy. Parents said how keen their children are to use these skills and how much they enjoy choosing their reading book and practising with this at home.

Partnership is a strong theme across your practice, which is evidenced well by the secure arrangements and relationships between yourself and the on-site private childcare provider. Both settings know the priorities of the other and have incorporated these into their planning. Assessments are moderated between the two, and so no learning is lost as children move from childcare into the nursery. Those more able and ready are given the experience of the nursery school through the effective integrated arrangements.

Staff are highly skilled at engaging children in learning both indoors and out. Indoors, we watched an adult-led activity. While the focus was on numeracy and the ordering of numbers to ten, a wide range of other areas of learning, such as body parts and functions, the seasons and phonics, were all woven in. Then, seamlessly, the group moved into the hall to dance. The excellent modelling and choice of music instantly engaged the children. They really enjoyed the physical exercise, but again the focus on language and literacy was reinforced with looking at how some letters are formed from straight lines. In tandem, this reinforced the understanding of the movement that had been practised in the dance activity. Pupils learned and had fun, reflecting the vision statement of the nursery. This was also a recurring theme in parents' comments and in conversations they had with me.

Support for those children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is highly effective. Strong partnership working with other professionals and specialists means children receive the right support at school. The early years special educational needs and/or disabilities support officers work effectively on a one-to-one basis with the children. High-quality individual support plans, created jointly with specialists and parents, address the children's needs and enable them to make good progress. Parents of children with SEND talk of the strong support they are given as they work their way through the system to secure provision for their children.

Behaviour management is highly effective. Children know to ask an adult to resolve any differences and adults ensure that resolutions are acceptable. Staff are skilled at using diversions to steer children away from any possible conflict. For example, diverting a child to discuss a picture and how they made a tree safe to climb enabled other children to access this experience. Behaviour is, as a result, exemplary. Children are well-mannered. They happily work together, with even the youngest beginning to play with others. They know the routines to follow and do so with little intervention. They are confident and willingly talk about what they are doing. You give them responsibilities through being 'mini-teachers' each day, taking the register and being the helper for the day. They wait patiently to take their turn in activities. They are beginning to understand life in modern Britain, celebrating other cultures and traditions such as Chinese New Year. Most children are now securing 100% attendance.

Outcomes for children are improving. Some gaps still exist between groups of boys and girls, although these are closing over time. Progress is above average for most children, including those who are disadvantaged, particularly for those who spend five terms in the nursery. The high-quality support plans for children who have SEND are tailored to address their individual needs and so these children are making strong progress towards their targets.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the governing body follow best practice when appointing staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. You maintain detailed records of the

checks you make. All procedures are fit for purpose. You ensure that the most vulnerable children in your care are treated with the highest priority. All paperwork fulfils requirements and is of high quality and detailed. It tells the story well. You ensure that reports reflect the views and feelings of the parents and their children. You always attend relevant meetings about these children and send reports appropriately. Your partnership working is very strong, for example, with the family support workers on the same site, meaning any concerns are quickly shared and acted upon.

Inspection findings

- Staff are skilled at challenging children in their learning. For example, during the inspection I observed a member of staff following the interests of a child. The child wanted to climb a tree but was unable to reach the lowest branch. The member of staff provided resources, stood back and then asked the children how they thought the items could be used. The children then experimented, stacking wooden boxes until they could safely reach up and climb into the tree. In an adult-led activity, the member of staff asked the most able children some searching questions about describing the property of a square. Not content with the answers she received about corners and edges, she challenged them further to describe why this was a square and not an oblong. This made the children think more deeply until they recognised that the shape had equal sides.
- You consulted with the governing body during the creation of the nursery's self-evaluation document. Governors have ensured that their strategic priorities are reflected in the nursery development plan. Governors are secure in using the very accessible data reports that you provide for them, giving them a knowledge of how well the nursery is doing. However, they do not use the reports well enough to glean an accurate picture of what provision looks like 'on the ground'. Consequently, this restricts the level of challenge and support they can provide. Appropriate challenge is seen in the governing body and sub-committee minutes, but this is not consistently recorded, meaning it can be difficult to follow up actions. Governors have been through a period of turbulence. The chairperson recently took up the role and three new parent governors are to take up post next term. However, they have completed a skills audit and know where their strengths lie and what areas they need to improve. They are now in a strong position to move forward.
- You have robustly identified any barriers to learning for those children who are eligible for support through the early years pupil premium funding. These are beginning to be addressed and so these children are making rapid progress from their starting points in all areas of learning. However, it is too soon to identify whether gaps are closing between those eligible children and their peers in school.
- Parents who I spoke with said how all the staff are friendly and welcoming. 'They are always cheerful and bright,' said one parent, 'which means children pick up on this and always want to attend nursery.' As one parent said to me, 'Children come in happy and go home happy.' Another commented this was because 'they have the full package: exciting activities, a good-quality environment and

supportive staff'. Parents are confident that should there be an issue, staff would sort it out and they feel that staff are accessible to them and are always available for a conversation about their child. One parent of a child with SEND said how staff had truly supported her to come to the right decision for her child. Effective actions by the nursery are having a positive impact on attendance. This is currently moving rapidly towards being at least in line with the national average. Parents say that the attendance board display and star of the week, alongside letters home and explanations about infectious illnesses, have made them think more carefully before taking their child off school, even for a day.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new assessment procedures and processes are fully embedded, and the findings used to inform improvements to teaching and learning experiences
- the governing body's knowledge of the nursery is enhanced so they consistently challenge and support the headteacher from a well-informed position.

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

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Dorrity
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The focus of the inspection was to affirm the findings identified at the previous section 5 inspection and to find out how well children in the nursery were progressing. I held a variety of meetings with you and your staff. I observed five extended sessions, three jointly with yourself in the nursery. I considered a range of evidence, including the school improvement plan and leaders' self-evaluation report. I also reviewed other documentation.

I met with the three members of the governing body and spoke with a representative of the local authority. I considered the 10 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and I spoke with nine parents. I also took account of the six responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and spoke with two members of staff about their views of the nursery.