

25 June 2019

Ms Susan Allan
Headteacher
Ribblesdale Nursery School
Queens Road
Clitheroe
Lancashire
BB7 1EL

Dear Ms Allan

Short inspection of Ribblesdale Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 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 school was judged to be good in December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your leadership has motivated staff to develop their professional skills through taking part in a wide range of training opportunities and sharing good practice with one another and with other local schools. Your team of staff have a broad range of professional expertise that supports children's learning across all the early years areas for development. You have built a climate where staff continually reflect on how well their practice is supporting children's progress. They willingly adopt new approaches where national and international research suggests that these may be even more effective.

Your work to develop strong relationships with parents and to support them in helping children to continue their learning at home is having a positive impact on children's progress. Parents hold the school in high regard. They typically comment that they feel most welcome in school and have every confidence that their children are very well cared for. Parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) particularly appreciate the way in which you skilfully identify individual needs and swiftly provide appropriate help and support for the whole family.

You have developed the indoor and outdoor areas to provide stimulating experiences for children. Staff make especially good use of the school's woodland area to continue the 'forest school' activities children experience on trips to a local quarry area arranged in collaboration with the Wildlife Trust. This supports children's good personal and social development. They become confident and resilient learners, curious to know more about the natural world and respectful of the environment.

You and your staff are keen to give children realistic experiences, such as constructing buildings with bricks while wearing hard hats, using builders' trowels and their own homemade mortar. I also observed children's wonder at seeing the progress of the ducklings they had watched from the first moments they hatched out of their shells in the incubator. Staff capitalised on this learning, extending children's thinking and language development through encouraging them to talk about eggs and explore the best materials and conditions for making nests.

Since the last inspection you have worked hard to ensure that all children receive sufficient challenge, particularly when playing in the outdoor areas. I was able to see that staff working outside with groups of children used highly effective questioning to deepen children's understanding and extend their vocabulary.

Sometimes, when children are playing and exploring by themselves, they lose interest in their games. Staff do not always intervene quickly enough to move them on to other activities. When this happens, the children become restless and their behaviour is not as good as it is when they are busy with more structured activities.

Your recent actions to improve children's progress in reading and writing have been effective. However, I noticed that there is a limited range of books on display around the classroom and in the reading area. As a result, too few children opt for reading activities when choosing what they would like to do. This reduces their chance to make even more progress in reading.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There are appropriate systems in place to check that adults at the school are safe to work with children. All staff have received training in child protection, including in how to protect children from radicalisation. Safeguarding is an item on the agenda for each staff meeting where relevant information is circulated and discussed. More detailed updates take place at least once in each half term. Induction arrangements ensure that staff new to the school know exactly what to do if they have concerns about a child.

There is a real sense that safeguarding is very much part of the whole culture of the school. All concerns are carefully recorded and meticulously followed through. Importantly, staff know children and their families very well, forging strong relationships and professional trust. Staff know if things are not quite right and will always take appropriate action to make sure that children are safe and that any necessary intervention takes place at the earliest possible moment. Leaders and governors ensure that the systems in place to prevent children from accessing inappropriate information on the internet are robust.

Children learn to be independent and keep themselves safe and healthy from their very first days in the school. Handwashing and hygiene routines are carefully observed, for example before having drinks and snacks or after handling animals.

Inspection findings

- Firstly, I wanted to know how you have improved teaching since the last inspection and whether there is enough challenge for all children, especially when they are learning through play. You explained that staff have had frequent, high-quality training and development opportunities that have improved their practice. Furthermore, you have developed an approach to professional development where, in addition to your own observations and suggestions for improvement, staff reflect on their own performance and are keen to try new ways of working.
- Staff are particularly skilled in questioning children to extend their thinking and deepen their understanding. For example, children used outline drawings of one another to compare height. The teacher extended this experience by asking children to estimate who was the tallest or the shortest before children used tape measures to check on the accuracy of their statements. I also observed children playing outdoors with a large paint tray. The teacher encouraged them to use sticks and other natural materials to make marks or even to try and write their own names.
- All this indicates that your actions to improve teaching and challenge are effective and that there are appropriately challenging activities in all areas of provision.
- Secondly, I was interested to see how you have continued to develop the curriculum and how well this supports children's progress in the early stages of learning to read and write.
- All the learning areas, including those outdoors, now have resources carefully chosen to encourage children to make marks or try to form letters and numbers. Consequently, children's progress in writing is improving and the school's records indicate that well over half of the children have made more progress than is typical for their age.
- Phonics is part of the daily routine. The sessions are well-planned and effective in setting children off on the road to learning to read. Almost all children can identify a range of letter sounds and the most able children are able to read some simple three-letter words.
- By the time children leave the school, most of them are confident learners and well-equipped to tackle the challenges of reading and writing in the Reception year.
- Although teachers read to children every day from a range of high-quality texts, there is a limited selection of books for children to choose from. This means that the reading corner is not always used as well as it should be to stimulate children's interest and enjoyment of reading.
- When staff take part in children's playing and exploring activities, they are skilled in knowing when to step in and encourage children to think creatively and help them to develop good language and communication skills. However, sometimes when children are playing by themselves, they lose interest because staff do not intervene swiftly enough to distract them and take things off in a new direction. Where this happens, children's behaviour is less good than it is at other times

and their progress is not as strong.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children continually have access to a wide range of texts that stimulate their enthusiasm for reading and help them to make even more progress in learning to read
- staff quickly identify when children are losing interest in their independent play activities and intervene swiftly to re-engage them with purposeful 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 Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janette Corlett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and other members of your staff. You accompanied me on visits to the classroom and the outdoor areas, where I observed learning that was led by adults as well as when children were playing independently. I spoke with a representative of the local authority and two members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. I considered school improvement action plans, the school's information on progress and leaders' self-evaluation. I also checked on the contents of the school's website. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day as well as with two parents who requested a separate conversation with me. I considered 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and seven written responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility.