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Mrs Gogarty
Executive Headteacher
The Castle Nursery School
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Dear Mrs Gogarty

Short inspection of The Castle Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 10 May 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 nursery was judged to be good in October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You lead the staff in an exemplary manner. Your commitment to the nursery is there for all to see. Parents and staff know that you lead and manage the school successfully. You support staff well in their development and they know that the best interests of the children lie at the heart of all you do.

In all the sessions of teaching and learning we observed together, children were engaged in learning. They knew the routines to follow and swiftly settled into the activities. They focused on what was being taught and the resources used helped the older children to achieve in both mathematics and phonics. This was unmistakable evidence of the individualised learning that parents and carers refer to in their response to the parental questionnaire. Parents also noted that their children were consistently challenged and we saw this in practice. For example, in the literacy session observed we saw the most able children identifying initial sounds and using these to spell three-letter words accurately. They then went on to practise this skill in their free play when labelling their maps, showing how they had absorbed what they had been taught and that they were able to use and apply their new knowledge.

The welfare of the children in your care is a priority. Children settle into the nursery quickly because of the care and thoughtfulness of the staff. A parent told me how considerate staff are, both in looking after the needs of the child and in the

emotional needs of the parents. All parents spoken to said how impressed they are at how swiftly you engage other services where required. You recognise that many of these services are stretched and so have taken steps to ensure that all staff are trained in speech and language therapy and in the progress check for two-year-olds. This means that any gaps in children's development can be swiftly addressed, that any developmental delays are quickly identified and that you secure any additional support and funding as early as possible.

All this strong provision enables most children to make good progress during their time in the nursery. However, there is limited evidence of them making more rapid progress than this. The excellent observations and ongoing assessments of children's development effectively inform the new tracking system. Governors receive high-quality written reports from you to enable them to challenge you effectively. Visits, learning walks and presentations by staff mean that they can see these reports in action. However, the tracking system is not yet used to identify trends in learning. Neither is attainment summary information used to support decisions of leaders and managers better.

Safeguarding is effective.

The governing body has completed a safeguarding audit of practice, policies and procedures. Whenever they visit the nursery they consider how safe the environment is. They regularly check that staff understand how to respond to any concerns they may have about a child in their care. You maintain high-quality files recording any worries you may have so that children are safe. You have a good understanding of when and how to refer matters to other services. Your tracking system at the level of the individual child means that you can effectively identify the progress of these children in your care. Following any referral, you are relentless in following it up with determination to ensure that families and children receive the services to which they are entitled. You effectively teach children how to keep safe, for example through the risk assessments you and the children make when they are playing outdoors. Governors monitor this area of work closely and ensure that all requirements are met.

Inspection findings

- You have fully implemented the recommendations from the previous inspection and made some significant improvements. You researched and evaluated several tracking systems before making a considered decision. At the current stage of development this is at individual child level. This fully supports any actions coming from pupils' progress meetings and means that you can track the individual child and ensure that all children make at least good progress from their different starting points. However, this has meant that you are not yet able to identify sharp and meaningful targets for the development plan. The development plan, while exceptionally highly detailed and clear to follow, is therefore more difficult to monitor.
- You have spent the additional funding you receive for children eligible for the pupil premium funding wisely. This has had a very positive impact on the

attendance of these children and so on their attainment. You have trained all staff in the initial assessment you make and so it is more accurate and you are able to identify and address any barriers to learning for these children.

- The nursery is accessible to all children. The most up-to-date version of the accessibility plan to ensure this is available on the website. Alongside this, the inclusive practice observed during the inspection is highly effective. Individual visual timetables and prompts for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities enable them to achieve independence in their learning and help them develop their social skills. Bilingual support staff give children who are at the initial stages of learning English as an additional language access to the rich learning environment.
- Extremely strong relationships with parents have been developed further. Parents say that the school encourages them to be involved in their child's learning and supports them. You provide many opportunities for parents such as homework, story-reading and craft sessions, as well as twice-yearly face-to-face meetings and ongoing daily discussions. Parents have a good understanding of how their children learn, what progress they make and where they need to go next. They are also given useful individualised advice on how to help their children at home every week. They feel staff are very approachable and really listen to them.
- The provision for two-year-old children has been introduced since the last inspection. You have ensured that staff working in this area are particularly strong in working with this age group and that your deputy, who is a specialist leader in education, manages this. You have made sure that this provision is of the highest quality through external and internal review and have included the governing body in these reviews. The provision is used by the local authority as an example of best practice. We observed this during our visit to this area. Children were working together in the water area, filling the water butt. They knew they had to work together to lift the hose to make sure that the water drained in properly. Some explored the properties of water, transporting it to make puddles in the water tray. All the while a member of staff was talking them through their actions, developing their vocabulary and asking them questions. Elsewhere, another member of staff introduced numbers and counting to a game where children were taking turns jumping off a low-level bridge. This effectively developed their play, their language and their numeracy skills. In another area, children were putting together their own experiment, using resources freely available. They used guttering and sand and then tested which vehicles would travel the fastest and the furthest, independently developing their understanding of velocity and speed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the much-improved tracking system is further embedded so that progress is better identified, analysis can take place at group level and clear, time-limited targets can be set
- the number of children making accelerated progress increases.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. 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 check whether the good standards identified at the previous inspection had been maintained and to find out how well children were progressing. I held a variety of meetings with you and your staff. I observed adult-supported and child-initiated learning with you. I considered a range of evidence, including the school improvement plan and leaders' self-evaluation. I also reviewed other documentation.

I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and spoke with the school improvement partner. I considered the 13 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the nursery's own consultation results. I spoke with four parents. I also took account of the 11 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.