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Mrs S Heath
Interim headteacher
Guildford Nursery School and Children's Centre
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Dear Mrs Heath

Short inspection of Guildford Nursery School and Children's Centre

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 2016, 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

School leaders and governors provide a good quality of education for children in the school. There have been a number of challenges facing the school in recent years and some aspects of the school required urgent attention. You have not shied away from these challenges or from making difficult decisions since you took up your appointment as the interim headteacher. Changes to ways of working and a review of systems and procedures have ensured that children are cared for well, kept safe and are happy to come to school. Children are prepared well for the next stage of their learning and development.

There are a number of new governors, including the chair of governors. The new chair of governors has quickly galvanised the governing body to cohesively and effectively check on the work of the school. A recent audit of governor skills has ensured that the skills of each member are matched to their responsibilities within the governing body. Governors monitor the work of the school well. Governors have a good understanding of their responsibilities. You and the governing body have consulted on a renewed vision for the school. The school's self-evaluation accurately reflects the strengths and weakness of the school. The centre development plan focuses appropriately on the most important areas identified for improvement.

You have restructured the senior leadership team, the staff team and the administrative team within the school. You set high expectations for all staff. Clear lines of accountability for staff are in place. Middle leaders are helping to promote high-quality teaching. The two teachers at each setting are responsible for

delivering effective learning opportunities for all children. Your tenacity in developing a vision with all staff ensures that everyone is working together to achieve the shared vision at both sites. You have implemented a system to check on the performance of all staff. Targets for teachers and support staff are linked to the priorities set out in the centre development plan.

Senior leaders have put in place an effective system to track the progress of all groups of children over time. Your deputy headteacher makes effective use of this information to analyse children's progress across all areas of learning. This information is used well to adjust provision in each setting to increase rates of progress, particularly in areas where children's progress is slower.

Senior leaders meet with teachers and early years staff regularly to discuss the progress that each child is making. You and your staff are reflective and responsive. Concerns about children's progress in any area of learning are identified and action is taken to make sure that children are provided with further stimulating and enjoyable experiences to help them to catch up.

The school has a number of allocated places for children with particular needs. Staff are trained effectively to support children with a range of different needs. Effective use of resources stimulates children's learning. Relationships are good. Children are relaxed, confident and happy to explore the wide range of activities on offer. Many sustain their attention to complete tasks successfully.

There have been a number of staff changes since the previous inspection. This has meant that one of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection has not been fully addressed yet. Some staff are more effective than others in their support for children in the activities they choose for themselves. Some staff do not support children well enough to make the most of role play. Staff are providing more opportunities for reading and writing indoors and in the outside area.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors have significantly improved safeguarding procedures in recent months. All staff are trained at an appropriate level and all have a good understanding of their responsibilities to safeguard children. A number of staff, including senior staff, have been trained at a higher level. There are good ratios of staff trained at a higher level at both the Hazel Avenue site and the York Road site.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose; records are detailed and of high quality. Required staff recruitment and vetting procedures are carried out, including prohibition from teaching checks and disqualification by association checks. Induction procedures are robust. All staff are required to read and adhere to the latest 'Keeping children safe in education' guidance issued by the Secretary of State in September 2016. A range of policies, including the safeguarding and child protection policies, staff code of conduct, and the behaviour and whistleblowing policies, are provided to staff during their induction.

Premises risk assessments are routinely carried out. Both sites make suitable checks of visitors on arrival and all visitors are required to wear their photo identification badges, which are generated during the signing-in process.

Children are encouraged to keep themselves safe. They understand that they need to be careful of any hazards in the outside areas. Staff encourage children to wash their hands before eating snacks and lunch. Children learn about keeping themselves safe both inside and outside, including in the forest school area of the school grounds.

Inspection findings

- There have been a number of changes in the leadership of the school since the previous inspection. The school experienced a period of decline and the local authority was concerned. They began a leadership review in the summer of 2015 which resulted in your interim headship, from October 2015.
- Following your appointment you carried out a whole-staff review. The timings of the sessions provided for children were also reviewed. The school changed its name to Guildford Nursery School and Children's Centre in September 2016. A new headteacher is due to take up post in January 2017.
- During your tenure as interim headteacher, you have reviewed the school's vision with staff and the governing body. You, your staff and governors are ambitious for the school. There is a renewed impetus to make sure that all children make as much progress as possible.
- You have ensured that all adults are held accountable for the progress that children make. The qualified teachers in each setting are responsible for the day-to-day planning of learning activities. All early years staff share in the discussions of children's learning which take place at the end of the school day. Staff are reflective and responsive to the needs and interests of children, making sure that lessons are planned well and are appealing for children.
- Since September session times for children have provided more opportunities for them to learn together across all age ranges. Children freely and routinely access learning both inside and outdoors. Children's attitudes to learning are good. They show interest and enthusiasm for the activities available for them. Children at the Hazel Avenue site enjoyed roaming the extensive outside area to collect 'ingredients' to mix in the mud kitchen. They were delighted to be able to mix leaves, mud, gravel and water in saucepan, bowls and buckets.
- All adults are responsible for the learning and development of a group of children in their key-person group. Regular observations of children's learning are recorded to build a picture of children's skills and understanding over time in each child's learning journey, which is shared with parents.

- Children at the York Road site enjoyed watching a film clip of children mixing potions. As they watched, they used a wide variety of materials to mix gloopy, blue potions in their goblets and bowls. The adult directing this activity supported children's language development well by describing the mixture and encouraging children to copy her words as they watched the gloop drip, drip, drip into the goblet. Children's enthusiasm for this activity was obvious for all to see.
- Many children arrive with skills and abilities that are lower than is typical for their age, particularly in forming relationships and speaking. All groups of children, including vulnerable children and the most able vulnerable children, and children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points. This is because adults know children's needs well and plan activities that stimulate their interests and help them to interact well with one another.
- Induction procedures for children prior to their start at school include a home visit by Nursery school staff to discuss children's particular needs with their families. This information is used well to plan activities that interest, excite and engage children in learning when they start school. The learning journeys for each child record their progress and development. However, parents say they would like to have more regular, up-to-date information about their child's progress, including, for example, what they have eaten during the school day.
- The centre development plan is a useful document to support the school to improve even further. Currently the success of the plan is not linked well enough to the anticipated gains in children's progress. It does not set out how the success of the plan will be measured.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- communication with parents is improved to ensure regular feedback is provided to help them know how well their child is learning and developing in each area of learning
- the school's actions in the centre development plan are evaluated and linked to impact on children's progress and development.

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

Ann Henderson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The key lines of enquiry identified in preparation for this inspection focused on:

- the effectiveness of the school in safeguarding children
- how well children are taught
- whether the school had sustained good outcomes for all groups of children, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged children, including the most able disadvantaged children
- how ambitious school leaders, including middle leaders and governors, are in improving the school even further.

I met with you, your deputy headteacher, who is also the early years leader, your special educational needs coordinator, staff, children and four governors. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I visited all classes at both sites with your deputy headteacher and observed learning in all the rooms and outside areas. I looked at samples of children's learning journeys. I took into consideration the staff survey results and the views of parents through the 'Parent View' questionnaire, and considered the comments placed on this website by parents. I evaluated the accuracy of your self-evaluation as well as a range of other documentation. I checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements.