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Ms Sharon Hogan
Acting Executive Headteacher
Strong Close Nursery School
Airedale Road
Keighley
West Yorkshire
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Dear Ms Hogan

Short inspection of Strong Close Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 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 May 2014

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As acting executive headteacher, along with the head of school, your leadership is exemplary. As a national leader in education, you have in-depth experience at managing change and swiftly identified the areas for improvement in the school since your appointment in September 2017. You have introduced significant changes since the interim management arrangements were put in place. You have made sure that everyone was brought along in these developments and that no one was left behind. When I spoke with staff, they said that they feel part of a team, and they know their contributions to developments are considered and welcomed. They know you want the best for the children, as do they, and that all the changes are focused on this one ambition. They said that they have excellent opportunities to improve their teaching and welcome your constructive criticism. They feel that their welfare is important to you. This strong management and the changes that are being brought about now need to be maintained.

Together, we observed strong teaching throughout the day. Wherever we looked, children were engaged in their learning. Staff are skilled at questioning children to extend their thinking. For instance, we watched children making 'ice cream' in the mud kitchen. Staff questioned them about where the ice cream might be put to freeze. They discussed what equipment might be in a kitchen that made things go cold. The children suggesting fridges, freezers and oven. This then prompted further discussions about which would be the coldest. The additional resources you have provided, the general refurbishment of the learning spaces, and the ability and

confidence of the staff to try things out have further enhanced the opportunities to follow children's interests. Literacy and mathematics are threaded throughout the curriculum. Boys are equally interested in reading books to each other, or writing, as are the girls. The way in which all children play and work together, no matter their ability, ethnicity or special educational needs (SEN), is noteworthy. This is because staff work hard at creating a supportive environment, where children can happily and confidently build relationships with each other. The new information and communication technology (ICT)-based assessment procedures have significantly increased staff confidence in their skills, and effectively enable parents and carers to be part of the process. Baseline assessment has been strengthened in both quality and accuracy. The learning environment continues to be developed. Staff note how the changes are helping them to teach and children to learn. You know that the best practice now needs to be enhanced across all areas of the curriculum.

Staff are highly skilled and trained in working with children who have SEN and/or disabilities. The local authority has noted this and, as part of a district-wide review, increased the number of places to enhance this aspect of the Nursery. You have effectively responded to this increase in numbers of children who have SEN and/or disabilities. You have ensured that all staff have specialist training for specific needs and have re-organised the spaces in the Nursery to create a calm area where lead staff can work in a focused way to meet these children's needs and enable them to make rapid progress towards their individual targets. The good levels of progress and achievement have been maintained. However, you know that there is more work to be done to ensure that the least able make rapid progress to ensure the highest outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Children and their families' welfare is of the highest concern for you. You have completed a safeguarding audit, alongside the governors, to ensure that children are safe and protected. All children are always well supervised. Staff are alert and generally have a good oversight of the areas they work in. For instance, when play in the house area became a little boisterous, staff quickly intervened to calm the behaviour and return the focus to the original purpose. Again, when outdoors, a child became upset and staff reacted very quickly to reassure them. Staff consistently follow behaviour management procedures, diverting children into positive activities, while explaining the unwanted behaviour. Children are confident that staff will resolve any conflict, of which there are few low-level instances. Children who have SEN and/or disabilities are particularly well supervised. The creation of the quiet, calm and responsive environment means that they feel safe at all times. Staff respond with great empathy and, where appropriate, move resources to enable children to engage and develop confidence.

You have introduced efficient systems for recording any incidents and concerns. You ensure that this information is monitored so that children are protected against harm. Leaders and managers work effectively with partners and are tenacious in

ensuring that families receive the support they need. When these services are not available, you make sure that the parents and children are still supported through such actions as visiting them at home and assisting them to access other activities such as baby massage. Governors agree that this is an important part of your work and have established a parent involvement officer post to undertake this role. There are currently no vulnerable children attending the nursery, but paperwork efficiently records every child's story and demonstrates the effectiveness of any interventions. Staff know the procedures to follow should they have any concerns about a child or a member of staff. They know the role that the local authority designated officer plays in the reporting arrangements.

Inspection findings

- Mathematics is seen throughout the Nursery, with staff accurately using the correct mathematical terms. Staff are skilled at altering or adapting activities to ensure that children are stretched and their learning is deepened. For example, during the inspection, I saw an activity in which children were matching handmade models of peppers to numbered pictures. As children approached to take part in the activity, the member of staff swiftly changed pictures to ensure exactly the right amount of challenge. So, while one child was counting to five, another was counting to twenty. Children concentrate on mathematical problems because they can solve them in a practical way, developing their understanding. For instance, when building a tower of bricks, a child was challenged to make it taller. Further challenge was added by the member of staff asking how they could design it, and what resources they would need. The child remained engaged with this problem for an extended period.
- The quality of teaching is improving. Staff said that they have benefited from observing outstanding practice in other settings and sharing this with practitioners in the Nursery. They also value the many other professional development opportunities they can access. Your accurate observations and identification of improvements are well received and acted on. Staff all have a target for their own improvement linked to the school priorities, and achievable within their responsibilities. They also have a professional development target linked to developing their teaching skills. All this means that the Nursery is moving forward.
- Extremely strong governance is in place and governors know the Nursery well. They have effectively steered it through a period of turbulence, while maintaining the good standards from the previous inspection. They have put a long-term sustainability plan in place, in consultation with the local authority and supported by a collaboration with two other nursery schools. They effectively monitor the progress of children through the more detailed but accessible data reports presented by you and the management team. They are supportive and challenging, questioning to ensure that money is spent to improve outcomes for the children.
- Attendance is slowly improving. Parental involvement in their child's learning has been greatly enhanced by the introduction of the ICT-based assessment system. They contribute to this online and feel very well informed of their children's

progress. They feel that staff are very approachable and always available for informal chats. One parent stated in response to the questionnaire, 'Staff are very friendly and informative and quick to answer any questions I've had.' Other responses echoed this feeling. The informative half-termly newsletter helps them to identify the best ways they can support their child's learning at home. Parental representation on the governing body has recently been strengthened, and governors make themselves available at open events for parents to approach them, as well as being identifiable through displays in the building.

- The new assessment system enables effective monitoring of children's progress weekly by all staff and termly by senior leaders. Any slacking in progress is quickly identified, and interventions made to ensure that children are soon back on track. However, you know that there is still work to be done to make sure that the children of a lower ability make even more rapid progress, so that all children leave the Nursery meeting age-related expectations.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new assessment processes are embedded to improve the progress of the least able
- best practice continues to extend across all areas of the curriculum
- the current high-quality leadership and management practice is maintained and enhanced.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. 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, the head of school and your staff. I observed adult-supported and child-initiated learning jointly with you in the Nursery. I considered a range of evidence including the school improvement plan and leaders' self-evaluation. I also reviewed other documentation.

I met with members of the governing body and spoke with a local authority representative. I considered the six responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and one written submission by a parent, and the school's own parent surveys. I also took account of the three responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.