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Mrs Holly Bowman
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bowman

Short inspection of Emneth Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 30 October 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 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 previous inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You have done a great deal to improve the school since you took over as headteacher in September 2016. You are determined to offer children the very best start to their educational careers. You and the deputy headteacher are both specialist early years teachers. The school benefits greatly from your very strong shared knowledge and understanding about how young children learn and develop.

You and the deputy headteacher continually research methods and approaches to early years education, in order to further develop your own knowledge. For example, the school is currently part of two projects, with other schools in the European Union, looking at the effectiveness of different approaches to learning in the early years. You use this research extremely effectively to improve the school's provision.

Your commitment to ongoing research is reflected in the very high quality of the school's environment, both indoors and outside. Every aspect of how the provision looks, how things are presented, what is and is not included, has been very carefully thought out. As a result, the learning environment is of an extremely high

standard, enabling children to develop a strong love of learning and to make excellent progress.

Emneth Nursery gives a good impression from the moment visitors walk through the door. Leaders and governors have taken great care to ensure that the building is well maintained, notably clean and appropriately decorated. The school is a friendly and happy place. Staff enjoy their work and are proud to be members of the Emneth team. A very high proportion of staff responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire. Every response to every question in the survey was positive.

Leaders and governors have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Children are now provided with a wide range of opportunities to think hard and to extend their learning. You have also made huge strides in involving parents and carers in their children's learning. The quality of teaching is now very strong and is highly effective.

You and the deputy headteacher carry out a range of monitoring activities, such as observing the quality of teaching and learning. Your excellent understanding of what strong early years practice looks like enables you to identify accurately the strengths of what you see and what could still be improved. However, the school's approach to monitoring and school improvement is not as systematic as it could be. It is not yet clear how each monitoring activity feeds into the next, in order to form a continual spiral of improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Governors check regularly that safeguarding is effective. For example, the nominated safeguarding governor checks that the school's single central record meets requirements and that recruitment processes have been followed fully. You are deeply committed to ensuring the safety of the children that attend the school. You have a very good understanding of your role as the school's designated safeguarding lead. You have ensured that other staff are trained to carry out this crucial role at times when you are not present in the building.

Staff receive regular training to enable them to recognise possible signs of abuse and neglect. Suitable processes are in place for staff to report any concerns that they may have about children. Prompt and appropriate action is taken, when necessary, in response to such concerns. The strong relationships between children and staff help to keep children safe.

Inspection findings

- I followed three lines of enquiry to check whether the school remains good. First, I looked at what leaders have done to improve the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. I checked whether teaching is consistently of a very high standard that is worthy of dissemination to others. I found that it is. The school regularly hosts visits from staff from other early years settings, who come to

observe the school's very strong practice. We talked about ways that you could develop this without adding to your workload or that of other staff.

- You have a very clear view of what strong teaching looks like and you have done a great deal to improve the quality of teaching in the school. You started by looking closely at the school's curriculum and deciding the approach that you felt would work best for Emneth. This then enabled you to provide the right development opportunities for staff, successfully improving their knowledge and skills.
- Staff are highly skilled in supporting children's early learning. They know when to support a child or to move his or her learning on but, crucially, they also know when to stand back to allow the child to work things out for themselves. We saw a clear example of this during the inspection. A child wanted to use water to make a pile of leaves flow down a length of guttering. His initial attempts did not work. The support that he received from a member of staff enabled him to think and reflect, in order to solve the problem. Despite being one of the youngest in the nursery, the child was able to sustain his concentration for some 40 minutes as a result of highly effective teaching.
- Staff are also highly skilled in developing children's speech and language. They provide children with ample opportunities to talk and to develop their conversational skills. Staff model how and what to say in social situations. For example, during snack times, held in small social groups, staff politely ask children questions such as, 'Would you like some banana?' Children respond in kind with a polite 'yes, please' or 'no, thank you'. Staff use carefully chosen questions to encourage children to think about the activities that they take part in and to talk about their learning.
- I also looked at how well the school meets the needs of disadvantaged children and children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. I checked whether these children make substantial progress from their individual starting points.
- Provision for these children is highly effective. Leaders ensure that children's individual needs and any barriers to learning are identified as quickly as possible, often before their first day at school. You use this information to help you ensure that provision is put in place quickly to meet children's specific needs. Many children who join the school with specific issues affecting their learning catch up with their classmates by the time they leave the nursery, as a result of highly effective provision for children who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged children.
- The early years pupil premium is spent very effectively. The funding is spent on meeting children's specific needs. You check that the measures put in place are successful before allowing them to continue. For example, after a successful trial earlier in the year, you have introduced a short-term, intensive language-support programme. You have found that this approach is helping children to catch up quickly.
- The final area that I looked at was how well leaders engage parents in their children's learning. This was an area for improvement from the previous inspection. In order to improve parents' involvement in their children's learning,

you decided to introduce an online assessment tool. This has been extremely successful. Currently 95% of parents are using the system regularly and are actively involved with their children's learning.

- You also use a range of other ways to involve parents. For example, you use 'gifting' as a way of involving parents in specific aspects of their child's learning. 'Goody bags' of well-chosen resources are provided for parents to take home, with ideas and suggestions for ways to work with their child. The online assessment tool shows a wide range of evidence of the home-learning activities that parents and children have enjoyed together.
- Parents are very happy with the school. Every parent who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school to others. In addition, every free-text response to Parent View was positive. One parent said: 'Excellent nursery school I would recommend to everyone. Warm and welcoming staff. Lovely atmosphere and a great approach to learning.' This response was typical of the feedback provided by parents.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's approach to monitoring of the quality of teaching and other aspects of provision becomes more systematic, so that each monitoring activity forms part of a continual spiral of improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and two governors. I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I took into account the 16 responses to Parent View and 15 free-text comments that were received. I took note of the eight responses to the staff survey. I observed teaching and learning, jointly with you, both inside and outdoors. I looked at a range of school documents including assessment information and the single central record of pre-employment checks.