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Mrs Julie Heron  
Headteacher  
Oxclose Community Nursery School  
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Oxclose  
Washington  
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NE38 0LA

Dear Mrs Heron

### **Short inspection of Oxclose Community Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 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 nursery was judged to be outstanding in March 2015.

#### **This school continues to be outstanding.**

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

You have continued to lead the nursery and staff with a clear focus on improving outcomes for children. Parents and carers spoke positively of how you and the staff are constantly providing different activities which engage their children in learning. All the developments have inclusion of all children at their heart. For instance, the laying of artificial turf has enabled children with disabilities to access the outdoor curriculum all year round. Parents told me how they valued this inclusion and spoke of how their children came home and taught them the sign language of Makaton.

You have further enhanced the provision for two-year-olds since the nursery took over the direct management of that provision. Staff identify how the effective training they have attended, both external and in-house, has improved their practice working with this younger age group and their leadership skills.

Staff well-being is a priority for you. A member of staff responded to a question in the survey, 'I have a very fair headteacher who embraces a healthy work-life balance.' In discussions with staff, they agreed with this and talked enthusiastically about the support they receive to follow their own interests and develop their own ideas.

The governing body knows the nursery well. Through focused visits and the detailed

reports they receive from you, they challenge from a position of knowledge. They are skilled at targeting precisely the right areas to challenge and support. For instance, they have correctly identified that children could do even better if the overall attendance improved.

Children are exceptionally well behaved. They are consistently on task, whether in adult-led or self-directed learning. They are aware of each other's needs and are polite and courteous to each other and adults. This is because of the value staff place on the children's contribution. For example, staff thank children when they pick up resources from the floor. Children are extremely confident and willingly talk to adults about what they are doing. This is because of the high priority all staff place on the children's well-being. This means they build secure and open relationships. The youngest children are beginning to become more independent, for example putting on their own coats or choosing resources to extend their play. They are starting to work well together. For example, they help each other carry large building blocks when tidying away at the end of a session. The older children happily cooperate when playing board games, taking turns without adult intervention. All children are aware of the high expectations you set for their behaviour. They know the routines to follow and do so with no reminders from an adult.

All staff are skilled at developing children's vocabulary, particularly through storytelling and retelling. We observed, together, a group re-enacting the story of the 'Three Billy Goats Gruff' in both adult-led learning and child-initiated play. In the adult-led activity, the vocabulary and knowledge of how a book works was evident, with children talking about the 'blurb' and 'characters'. The member of staff then introduced the concept of the 'setting' of the tale. Another member of staff was observed introducing the repetitive sound of 'Tap! Tap! Tap!' while playing in the sand with a young child, developing early phonic skills. Staff engage children, following and building on their interests. With the youngest children, we saw how a member of staff developed a child's game of rolling a truck down the hill by introducing hoops to roll. In the high-quality learning journals we looked at, we saw how staff had built on children's interests in space to introduce reference books.

From generally low starting points, most children make excellent progress during their time in the nursery and leave at levels of development typical for their age. In discussion, parents commented on the great progress their children make in all areas of learning, particularly in their speech, reading, writing and mathematical understanding.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and the governing body follow best practice when appointing staff and maintain detailed records. All procedures are fit for purpose. You have put in place refresher training for staff in all aspects of safeguarding. This means that all staff are well informed and up to date in their practice and knowledge. Parents told me how you remind them to switch off their mobile phones before they enter the nursery and how they must always ask for permission before they take any photographs. They

also noted how any photographs of activities that you published never showed the faces of the children, to ensure they were protected. They were confident in your ability to keep their children safe, and knew the process you would follow, and why, should you become concerned about their child's safety and welfare. They told me that they felt that this area of work was a strength of the nursery.

## **Inspection findings**

- Staff are skilled at asking questions to develop children's critical thinking. For example, we saw how, from an interest in using binoculars to observe birds outdoors, children then made bird feeders. Throughout this activity, staff posed questions such as: 'What do you think you will need and why?' Another example was when children were making fans as part of the celebrations for Chinese New Year. When the handle came off one of the fans, staff were quick to use this real-life opportunity to ask how this had happened and how it could be fixed. This prompted the children to think about the resources they might need to mend it. You have invested effectively in training for staff to increase their skills in questioning, following the previous inspection. This work continues, as you move towards further enhancements. Your high-quality observations clearly identify strengths and areas for improvement for staff, with actions to be completed. This means staff are very clear about how they can improve their practice. Often, your recording identifies the use of questioning to deepen understanding, but also the need to enhance children's vocabulary.
- Staff know and apply all safety procedures at arrival and departure times. In speaking with me, all staff related exactly the processes that are adhered to at the beginning and end of every session. Parents were very impressed with the security of their children. They talked with me of how every door has a member of staff on duty, and how the children are not allowed through until ready. They also noted how any 'unknown' adult is stopped and their identity checked, even if they are accompanied. This meant, they all agreed, that their children were always safe and secure in the nursery, but particularly when there was much coming and going. You ensure that no child slips through the net and keep any children at risk of harm at the top of your priorities, working closely with other professionals. You will not cease from highlighting these children until your concerns are addressed. Governors assure themselves that safeguarding is secure during their visits, by reviewing policies and procedures and looking at records. They are also up to date in their training.
- Parents say they are very well informed about their children's progress through a variety of opportunities. First and foremost was the daily opportunity for discussion at the beginning or end of the session. I saw how professional staff were in their conversations with parents at the beginning of the day, identifying and addressing any concerns parents may have. Parents attend termly meetings, are presented with a review in between these and have access to a wide range of workshops. At these reviews, staff identify how parents can support their children's learning at home. Parents said that they also use your website and other digital communications to get additional ideas for supporting learning.
- Children make rapid progress during their time at nursery. A large minority begin

their nursery experience with skills and knowledge well below those typical for their age. However, a majority of children leave the nursery with skills and knowledge at least typical for their age. This shows very strong progress. Learning journals demonstrate well how the children's language shows exceptional development, because of the staff skills and the wide range of experiences the children are given.

- Inclusion lies at the heart of the nursery. Parents note how all children play and work together in a harmonious environment. This is because staff are skilled at supporting those children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and ensuring that they can join in all activities with their friends. Extremely detailed plans identify individual barriers to learning and the actions needed to address these effectively. Robust relationships have been established with other professionals to ensure that children swiftly receive the support they require. This means that these children make as steady progress as their peers, and many leave the nursery at levels typical for their age in specific areas of learning.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve attendance.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sunderland. 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 affirm the standards identified at the previous section 5 inspection and to find out how well children and the nursery were progressing. I held a variety of meetings with you and your staff. We observed five extended sessions and activities 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 the vice-chair of the governing body and spoke with a representative of the local authority. I considered the 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View and I spoke with 11 parents. I also took account of the 13 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and spoke with five members of staff.