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Mrs Jenette Indarsingh and Mr Chris Mead
Heads of school
Thornton Heath Nursery School
51 Pridham Road
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Dear Mrs Indarsingh and Mr Mead

Short inspection of Thornton Heath Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 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 school was judged to be good in June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last 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 and the extended leadership team have worked highly effectively to build on the strengths identified at the last inspection. You have also tackled the recommendations successfully. For example, staff are now highly skilled at developing children's language. They listen to children, prompting only when necessary. As one governor put it, 'Staff intervene but don't interrupt.' Consequently, children are very confident to talk about themselves and their learning.

You have created a dynamic, stimulating environment which excites children and makes them want to learn. Strong relationships underpin everything that the school does. This supports children's emotional development exceedingly well. Another of the school's particular strengths is how well you identify and support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. You ensure that they move on to provision that will be the most appropriate for them. Parents, staff, governors and the local authority all praise this effective work.

Parents are effusive in their praise of the school. Comments such as 'amazing

dedication' and 'staff go above and beyond' were typical. Those whose children are due to transfer to Reception classes in September feel that they are very well prepared. Evidence gathered across the course of the day supports that view.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Procedures for recruiting staff and checking their suitability to work with children are robust. Staff complete regular checks to ensure that the premises are safe. Educational visits are carefully planned and any potential risks mitigated.

Training for safeguarding is comprehensive and regular. Weekly reminders keep staff constantly up to date. Staff know children really well and can therefore easily spot a change in demeanour or behaviour. Leaders follow up these concerns. Where necessary, they will refer on to outside agencies so that families get the support they need. This ensures that the most vulnerable children's needs are well met.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the day, we chose three key lines of enquiry. The first one was to look at challenge for the most able children. We chose this because it was a recommendation from your last inspection. We visited lessons and looked at children's work over time, and the detailed observations your staff make. This evidence showed that, throughout their time at the school, the most able children encounter well-crafted, open-ended activities that really stretch their thinking.
- Children are encouraged to use their imaginations to expand on what they already know and have experienced. For example, some of the most able children invented their own board game and pretended to have a dice that went up as far as 12,000. They knew that this number has a one, a two and three zeros. They also realised that it would take a long time to move one's counter that many spaces.
- Opportunities for reading and writing abound. When the sandpit was turned into a café, children were serving one another and taking orders. Children wrote lists of the items they needed to replenish their stocks, such as 'apos' (apples) and bots mk (bottles of milk). The nursery is full of labels that children have written, for example to keep track of the many plants that they grow. This clearly benefits the most able children, who are very confident writers when they transfer to primary school.
- Our second line of enquiry was the provision for two-year-olds. You wanted to look at this because your information shows that those who attend at that age have higher levels of attainment by the time they leave than those who join at age three.
- From the time that they start with you, children have a wide range of opportunities to develop as active learners and critical thinkers. There is a big focus on reading, with very inviting reading areas inside and out. During the inspection, children were enjoying books in the 'secret garden' outside. Staff encourage early writing and mark-making, as well as the use of the appropriate

technical language to describe things. For example, children were very interested in an area set up outside with a focus on dinosaurs. One child drew a very accurate triceratops and was delighted to learn its name, using it for the rest of the morning. Consequently, children make very good progress in acquiring academic skills.

- There is also a strong focus on being ready to learn and cooperating well. Children quickly learn to share even the most popular resources. For example, they know that they can get a sand timer and, when it is finished, it will be their turn. They manage this turn-taking very sensibly and independently.
- The final key line of enquiry looked at the curriculum because you have been focusing on developing this recently. You and your staff wanted to make sure that your curriculum covered both the required areas of learning but also the characteristics that children need in order to be good learners. Planning reflects this. The examples above show that children have very positive attitudes to learning and ample opportunities to think creatively.
- In terms of different subjects, you noted that computing did not have as high a profile as other areas. Nor did children have access to high-quality resources. There has been a concerted and successful drive recently to remedy this. During the inspection, we saw children confidently using the programming language of 'forwards', 'backwards', 'left' and 'right' to move new remote-controlled cars in given directions. They worked very collaboratively, helping each other when stuck.
- You are pleased with these developments. However, you and your team feel that that there remain some areas where you could provide further skills and experiences. For example, children do not undertake practical, real-life uses for fine motor skills such as woodwork, nor develop a full understanding and appreciation of the outdoors.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they audit the curriculum further to fully identify any gaps so that they can provide children with the truly broad, inspirational and innovative education that they deem vital for the 21st century.

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

Yours sincerely

Jeanie Jovanova
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, office staff, one of the executive headteachers from the academy trust that manages the nursery on behalf of the local authority, a representative from the local authority and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I talked to parents as they dropped off their children, and considered the 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as the comments left on the free-text facility. I also took into account the 11 responses to the staff survey. I looked at a range of information, including documents relating to safeguarding and child protection, your self-evaluation and improvement planning, the policies and other details you publish on your website, and teachers' planning and assessment of children's achievement. You accompanied me as I visited all the classes at various points during the day. We also looked at the learning journeys and the online observations you and your staff make to record children's achievements.