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Mrs Karen Smith
Headteacher
Lee Royd Nursery School
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Lee Royd 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 school was judged to be outstanding in 2014.

You became headteacher of the school in January 2018.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of outstanding as a result of this inspection.**

This school is a happy place to learn or work. As the new headteacher, you have set the right tone for moving the school forward. Staff morale is high. Teachers and teaching assistants believe in the changes you are bringing about to support and improve their skills. You show a deep understanding of the needs of local families, the quality of teaching provided by staff and education in the early years. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school.

The school remains an extremely well-resourced, organised nursery that provides children with a wide range of fascinating opportunities to learn. For example, children learn to create real fruit kebabs or predict what large, heavy teapots of water will feel like when empty. Children spend much time exploring outdoors, including being energetic and physically active. You are clear about what is going well in the school and what could be better. While the most successful teaching makes a big difference to children's learning, you recognise that some teaching needs to be more skilful.

At Lee Royd, children continue to develop strongly in their personal development and their behaviour. They are confident, happy and enthusiastic learners. They treat resources with great respect. Children from different backgrounds get along very well together. However, at the previous inspection, inspectors recommended that leaders improve children's attendance. In spite of attention to this issue by staff and leaders,

some parents do not bring their children to school as often as they should. You have set this as a current priority for improvement.

Governors are strongly committed to the development of the school. Even so, they need to support and challenge the work of staff and leaders in different areas of learning with even greater precision.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff supervise children well, including when they use the large outdoor equipment and areas to play. The atmosphere throughout the school is very positive and friendly. Children are rightly wary of strangers, such as an inspector. Parents say that their children love attending school and have a good relationship with their special member of staff. Parents told me that staff are always available if they need to discuss any individual concerns.

Leaders make sure that staff have appropriate training in safeguarding children. They give staff regular updates about local and national issues. Meetings between school staff are frequent and include regular discussion about safeguarding. You have established clear arrangements for staff to be able to talk with you individually and in confidence about their work with children. By considering the work of leaders at another outstanding school, you have already identified ways to strengthen your own successful oversight of safeguarding arrangements.

Governors use national guidance about safeguarding to ask how well the school protects children. Governors recognise that their knowledge of safeguarding is adequate but could improve. This issue does not indicate wider weaknesses, because the many other arrangements to care for and protect children are well organised and successful. The chair and two other governors will attend further safeguarding training this month.

Inspection findings

- As the new headteacher, you have set the school on a clear and ambitious journey to develop in the years ahead. During the inspection, I found that you: check the quality of children's learning precisely; have a detailed grasp of what high-quality education looks like in the early years; identify points for improving for staff's work carefully and knowledgably; and prioritise opportunities for staff to attend training and to learn from visits to other successful schools. Staff say that your support and advice helps them to get better at their jobs.
- The school now provides places for two-year-old children. Staff organise the classroom thoughtfully to give children valuable group activities, as well as quieter areas for play. Staff support children to be physically active, relate to others and to communicate.
- As soon as you took up your post in January 2018, you reviewed in detail how well children attend nursery school. You established that children's attendance is a priority for improvement, as it was at the previous school inspection in 2014. Your review shows that staff and leaders need to help parents better understand that full attendance, while not compulsory, is important preparation for primary school. You have set in place a range of actions to celebrate attendance with children. You chase

up and challenge parents about absences. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these changes.

- The most successful teaching by teachers and teaching assistants is rich in conversation with children, gentle encouragement and playfulness. Staff ask questions that provoke children to think and to reason. They listen patiently to children before responding. Staff use the outdoors well to develop children's physical skills. For example, during the inspection a teaching assistant created a 'super hero training camp' outdoors. She encouraged children to dress in capes and masks. She encouraged children to throw, balance, stretch, jump and manoeuvre. Their rich language and concentration showed that they were deeply engrossed in their learning. They were thrilled and excited about the fun in their game. At other times, staff do not support and extend children's thinking as skilfully. This variability in teaching, including for some two-year-olds, means that children sometimes learn less than they could as a result.
- Children achieve strongly in their personal, social and emotional development, as well as in their physical development. This is because staff are really successful at supporting these aspects of their learning. Leaders have identified correctly that staff need to better assist children to speak and communicate, as to well as to read and write. Leaders have invested in extra training to develop staff skills and knowledge. Leaders fund extra teaching to give children additional help to talk, sing songs and rhymes and recognise the sounds that letters make. Leaders ensure that staff support children to use a wide range of high-quality fiction and non-fiction books in cosy, attractive spaces.
- Governors are clear about the needs of the local community. They focus carefully on the most important issues facing the long-term development of the school to guide the work of leaders. Governors assist leaders to think about how the school can become even more successful and able to support the work of other schools and early years providers. Governors visit the school regularly to check what leaders tell them. They ask thoughtful questions of staff and leaders about their work, for example asking how the curriculum differs for children who attend school for 30 hours each week, instead of 15 hours. However, governors' knowledge of how well children develop in each area of learning is imprecise.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the work of staff, including those working with two-year-olds, strengthens further, for example by learning from the best teaching, learning and assessment in the school
- governors have a full understanding of children's attainment and progress in each area of learning and use this to challenge the work of the school even more
- parents bring their children to school more regularly.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I carried out these inspection activities:

- observed a range of children's learning, including outdoors in the rain, with the headteacher
- spoke with some children as they played
- checked the range, quality and organisation of resources in all classrooms and outdoor areas, including the fiction and non-fiction books available to children
- reviewed the quality of children's work as set out on display boards for parents
- met with the headteacher to review the work of the school since the previous inspection and consider information about children's attainment and progress
- examined responses from 14 staff to an Ofsted questionnaire and met with three staff
- talked with several parents as they brought their children to school and reviewed responses from 12 parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire
- met with the chair of the governing body and one other governor
- spoke with a representative from the local authority and reviewed their information gathered during visits to the school
- checked a sample of school safeguarding records and the content of the safeguarding policy
- reviewed with the school administrator and the headteacher the records of checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children.