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Mrs Faith Stringer
Headteacher
Rockwood Nursery School
Kingsland Road
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Dear Mrs Stringer

Short inspection of Rockwood Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 18 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 outstanding in October 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

You and the leadership team have maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your leadership continues to be inspirational and the enthusiasm and commitment of the staff shine through everything they do. Rockwood is a very happy place, where children thrive, teaching is excellent and outstanding progress has been sustained. Governors keep a close check on the school's work. They know just what questions to ask to make sure that they are up to date with everything. They hold the school to account well. Staff, parents and carers all praise highly the work that you do for them and for their children, and for the help you give them. All are proud to be part of this outstanding school.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They told me that the staff work extra hard to make sure their children are happy, safe and making progress. They also said that learning is 'creative and exciting' and their children cannot wait to get to school. They very much appreciate the opportunities you and your staff give them to discuss their children's learning and well-being, and how all of you are always ready to listen and help. Your partnership with parents is exceptionally strong. It is evident in the ease with which parents approach staff as they bring their children into school, and how you communicate with them, for example through the notebooks and the work staff put in pigeonholes for parents to check at the end of each day.

Children are happy and settled. They leave their parents confidently, and are very familiar with the established routines of the day. They sit and listen attentively to

stories. They respond to questions that encourage them to explore what a character might be feeling, or to think ahead to what might happen next. These skills are preparing them well for early reading. Their behaviour is exemplary, and relationships are excellent throughout the school.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to provide more opportunities for children to read outdoors. You have addressed this very effectively. Every activity and every piece of equipment is labelled. Indoors and out, children constantly see the written word and learn that it has meaning. For example, in the Treasure Hunt corner, related to work on minibests, words alongside pictures draw children's attention to what the words 'spider' or 'insect' looks like. You have ensured that staff are skilled at grabbing the moment to move children's learning on. They quickly adjust activities to take account of the children's interests, to encourage their curiosity and to open their minds to the wider world. All of this contributes to the children's excellent progress in reading. Progress is also outstanding overall in writing and mathematics but, as you have recognised, there is scope for even more improvement in these areas.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the governors have ensured that secure safeguarding arrangements are in place and records are detailed and of a suitable quality. It is very clear that everyone makes children's health, safety and well-being a high priority. The site is secure and office staff check all visitors as they arrive. You also make sure that parents know and understand the procedures. Staff are vigilant for any signs that raise concern. All training, including for first aid, is up to date and everyone knows what to do should there be any cause for concern. Staff also ensure children's privacy, for example when having their nappy changed or going to the toilet.

All staff, governors and volunteers are vetted to make sure that they are suitable to work with children. Suitable risk assessments are in place for all relevant activities, indoors and out, and for visits out of school. You and the staff teach the children how to keep themselves safe while managing day-to-day risks as they continue to grow and explore. You have established very stringent guidelines for the use of computers, mobile phones and cameras to ensure children's safety. You monitor all reports very regularly and you keep all systems and procedures under close scrutiny to ensure that that they remain fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry in this inspection was to find out whether the progress children make remains outstanding. The second was to look at whether assessment systems are established, and whether staff use assessment information in their planning. I am combining these two lines of enquiry in this report because they are very closely linked.
- I found that all children make excellent progress, and not least because teaching is outstanding. Staff see children as individuals, with individual needs, and they plan accordingly, using the information gained from the now well-established

assessment systems.

- You have established planning 'in the moment', which is working really well. This means that, while staff take good account of what children have learned in the past, they quickly adjust learning in class to take account of what children say and do at any given moment.
- Assessment systems are thorough, and staff are now much more informed about the children's progress. The accuracy of assessment is secured through moderation of work in school and through work with other schools. These include the primary schools to which the children will transfer.
- You responded well to the governors' questions about technology and have ensured that children are beginning to develop the skills relevant to their age in this area. The records of children's work and progress that you showed me demonstrate how well and how quickly children develop key skills in all areas of learning, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- You have sustained outstanding progress by ensuring that teaching is superb, and staff have very high expectations for every child. Staff organise children's learning well, indoors and out, to help children develop reading, writing and number skills alongside skills in other areas of learning.
- The very strong focus on speech and language is proving successful. It is developing in the youngest children the ability to speak more clearly. Staff also help older children to develop the vocabulary that they need to communicate with others and to learn in different subjects.
- There is much to encourage early writing, including exercises to strengthen little fingers and help children gain the manual dexterity they need to hold and use pencils correctly. These things contribute to their excellent progress. Children thoroughly enjoy mark making and they learn to tie laces, open padlocks and switch torches on and off. Very occasionally, writing areas are not used well to extend writing skills because staff do not guide children towards them.
- Staff teach children how to count and order numbers, including through rhymes and songs. This leads to excellent progress overall. Numerals are on display at different places around the school, indoors and out, but staff do not always draw children's attention to them. At times, albeit occasionally, counting is not promoted enough in the outdoors.
- My third line of enquiry was to look at the impact your leadership has on teaching, learning and assessment for all groups of pupils. I found that it is outstanding.
- You are meticulous in ensuring that any difficulties or concerns, be they about learning or personal development, are picked up and addressed as early as possible. Your approach, which includes much tenacious work with external agencies and with parents, is benefiting children in your school. This is because you have ensured that staff have the skills required to identify at an early stage, any difficulties the children may be experiencing.
- The work you do to support families so that children can thrive and learn is outstanding. You make very effective use of additional funding, including the

pupil premium, to give children experiences they otherwise would not have. You have ensured that teaching remains outstanding and all staff have an extremely good understanding of how young children learn.

- Your impact on teaching and learning can be seen in the attention given to the curriculum. Planning is exceptional and ensures that every area of learning is given due attention, indoors and out. In the sensory garden, it was a joy to see children pursuing art, writing with water and learning to take turns to jump from a block and crawl through a tunnel safely.
- You ensure that staff make learning exciting and memorable for the children. This was particularly evident in an outdoor session where, in turn, a child hid a bear in the woods and other children searched for it. Astute adult questioning extended their vocabulary by helping them to discuss where the bear might be and how to get there. As they did so, a child commented triumphantly that an adult was too big to get through what was a small archway and would have to go around.
- You share your enthusiasm for learning with staff and you are all constantly looking for further ideas to build on the superb teaching and learning already happening in this successful school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the work done so far to improve writing and mathematics becomes fully embedded and staff take every opportunity to promote these skills in all areas of learning, indoors and out.

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

Doris Bell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out a wide range of activities during the inspection. I met with you throughout the day. Together, we observed teaching and learning across the Nursery and looked at children's work. I examined the assessment information you provided for me. I scrutinised a wide range of documents, including the school's own evaluation of performance and all safeguarding records, including those relating to attendance. I checked your recruitment and vetting procedures and

staff's and parents' understanding of safeguarding. I met with governors and with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school and I took account of the 19 responses to Parent View. I also took account of the 11 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.