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Mrs Mavis Smith  
Headteacher  
Rainhill Community Nursery School  
Deepdale Drive  
Rainhill  
Merseyside  
L35 4NW

Dear Mrs Smith

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

Following my visit to the school on 4 May 2016, 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 November 2012.

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

Rainhill Nursery School was judged by Ofsted in 2010 and in 2012 to be providing an outstanding quality of education. I have great pleasure in reporting that this excellent achievement has been sustained for a third time.

Under your excellent leadership, the school continues to provide a caring and nurturing environment where all groups of children make rapid progress towards their readiness for primary school. Children flourish as a result of the rich and stimulating activities that you and your staff provide. You strive in your efforts to constantly improve and provide the very best for the children at your school. Integrating two-year-olds into your provision and applying to become a teaching school are excellent examples of your determination to move the school onwards and upwards. You and your staff do not shy away from any shortcomings. For example, weaknesses were spotted in relation to boys' achievements in writing and creativity. Immediate action was taken that was effective. During my time at your school, I observed boys taking part in an exciting range of creative and writing activities. These were specifically designed to appeal to their interests and develop their skills in both areas.

Parents are anxious to highly praise all aspects of the school's work. They were especially keen and proud to tell me about the excellent progress that their children make. They really appreciate the workshops that you and your staff provide to develop their awareness of how literacy and numeracy are taught in the early years.

Parents typically told me that they are 'continually amazed at the breadth of learning that is covered' and that the quality of your leadership is 'outstanding'.

They also commented favourably about the settling-in procedures that the school has in place for children starting in the nursery and for their effective transition into Reception. You ensure that parents are involved in children's initial assessments when they start at the nursery. However, we both agree these assessments do not give enough detail regarding parents' views about what their children like and can do.

The quality of the learning environment, most notably indoors, is superb. Play areas are well set out, allowing children to move about confidently and safely. The resources that you provide are of high quality, exciting and easily accessible. This enables children to make independent and informed decisions about their play. Children are delightful and their behaviour is impeccable. They are confident, happy and unreservedly polite. As a visitor to your school I was made to feel very welcome. I felt very privileged and honoured when a child came up to me, took my hand, and asked if she could read to me.

At the last inspection the inspector asked you to further enhance the partnerships you have with local schools, particularly those that most children move on to when they leave the nursery. You and your staff have embraced this challenge in an innovative way. Working with these schools, you track the progress of the children that have attended your school. This allows you to assess and reflect on the impact of the initial ground work that you have put in with these children.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your staff place a very strong emphasis on keeping children safe. The entrance to the school grounds and the building itself are very secure. I was particularly impressed by the highly effective and well thought out procedures that you have in place for the safe collection of children at the end of the day. Parents, or those nominated to pick a child up, have a laminated photograph of the child which must be presented to staff before a child is released into their care. Staff have a good awareness of the signs and symptoms of abuse and the child protection procedures to be followed in the event of an incident. Your staff are also aware that anyone can make a referral to the relevant authorities if they have a concern about a child. They talk with some confidence about risks such as radicalisation, sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. The single central record is compliant and all records relating to safeguarding are of the required standard.

You quite rightly ensure that children are taught to keep themselves safe. To make them aware of safety you actively involve them in carrying out daily risk assessments of the learning environment. You and your staff teach them about keeping themselves safe when on the computer and give them a say when making school rules.

## Inspection findings

- You and your staff work exceptionally well as a team. You all have very high expectations of the children and recognise that each child is an individual and unique. You told me that you believe that there is 'no ceiling' on what children can achieve and you are right. This vision is shared by all your staff. As a team, you ensure that all groups of children, including the most able and disadvantaged children, are challenged in all areas of their learning. As a result, all groups of children make excellent progress from their starting points.
- You monitor the progress that all groups of children make and the quality of teaching with rigour. Your staff find the feedback from your observations helpful and constructive. You ensure that any training is linked to the school's priorities, which keeps staff knowledge fresh and up to date. Staff also have opportunities to observe best practice within your school, which helps to refine and further develop their teaching skills.
- High priority is given to teaching children the basic key skills to help them become curious and independent learners. Whilst at your school, I was impressed by the way children skipped happily into school, signed the register and hung up their coats. During the morning session, I observed them preparing their own snack and washing up afterwards. Children also told me that they make soup and bread.
- Your children show a real love of reading. Story time is an exciting session and is brought to life with the use of dolls. Children also love reading for pleasure. They handle books correctly and use their phonics (the sounds that letters make) skills to sound out unfamiliar words. They are able to predict what might happen next in the plot and are aware of book terminology such as 'the title'. I was equally impressed by the writing skills displayed by some of your children. Many can form recognisable letters and write their name. They are also aware that a sentence ends with a full stop and there must be a space between individual words.
- The local authority considers your school to be a 'model of excellence'. As such you have developed very good working relationships with local schools and registered early years providers to offer them challenge, support and share your expertise.
- You also work very closely with local colleges and universities. For example, you are currently working with a local college to support students who wish to become early years teachers. Under your instruction, students will learn about the theory of early years education and then undertake a placement at the nursery to get practical experience.
- Your governors share your passion and vision. They are very clear about your school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They act as a critical friend, offering you support and challenge in equal measure.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they obtain more detailed information from parents about what their children like and can do when they start at the nursery school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for St Helens. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I held meetings with you, members of the governing body and had a telephone call with a representative from the local authority. I also had informal discussions with a group of parents and staff to seek their views of the school. I went on a tour of the school accompanied by you and observed teaching and learning both indoors and outside. I looked at examples of children's work and listened to children read. I also reviewed a range of documentation including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan and records relating the monitoring of teaching and learning. Account was also taken of the responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire completed by parents and staff.