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Mr Lee
Plym Bridge Nursery and Children's Centre
Miller Way
Plymouth
PL6 8UN

Dear Mr Lee

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Plymbridge Nursery and Childrens' Centre

Following my visit to your school on 5 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in 20 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, your assistant headteacher, three representatives of the Governing Body, the local authority adviser for the Early Years Foundation Stage and two teachers, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. We visited the morning session in the nursery, looked at documents relating to recording and reporting children's development and the outcomes of your session observations.

Context

The roles and responsibilities of staff have been clarified following a restructuring of staff in the children's centre, day care and nursery. The interim board of governors is in the process of reconstituting as a federated board with the Hambridge nursery.

Main findings

The restructuring of the staff has been managed well. You have revised teachers' performance management. Teachers and teaching assistants now have roles and responsibilities commensurate with their salaries and experience. This ensures that everyone is more accountable for contributing to improving school performance. As a consequence staff morale is strong.

You are leading the school in a well organised way. Your actions focus precisely on the areas requiring improvement. You have implemented regular observations of children in the nursery so checks on their progress are made over time. We talked about how these could be further refined through target setting. You have quickly reorganised the session times to provide more opportunities for children to explore ideas and develop language through play. Teachers are planning together and focus rightly on the interests of the children. The free play is still not reflecting these interests well enough. Teachers' planning does not show a deeper understanding of the child's stage of development and learning and how the activity will advance this.

The snack time was a good example of how you have raised expectations about children's ability to organise themselves and make choices. This is having a positive benefit children's learning and development. Teachers have appreciated your guidance in planning. They now need to take more charge of this for themselves so they can respond quickly to the learning that is going on.

The governors have the expertise they require to check on the action being taken to improve the nursery. The plans to amalgamate with another nursery are distracting and they have yet to plan how they intend to carry out this responsibility.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- Further develop staff understanding and knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage principles
- Ensure the free play activities mirror closely the group session activities so children can reinforce what they are learning
- Implement procedures and processes whereby the governing body can carry out more challenge

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Local authority has supported you well through the staff restructuring. They have provided good guidance on how to deal with the budget deficit and financial management. They plan to use experienced Early Years Foundation Stage teachers to train your staff in observing sessions.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Plymouth City.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk
Her Majesty's Inspector