

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 01216 799154
Direct email: aidan.dunne@serco.com



13 January 2014

Joy Luxford
Headteacher
Grasmere Nursery School
Icknield Way
Luton
LU3 2BT

Dear Ms Luxford

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Grasmere Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 10 January 2014, 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 September 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- sharpen action planning by making obvious the link between each planned action and the difference it will make to individual and/or groups of children's learning
- inject more rigour into monitoring so that it is systematic and the evidence gathered feeds into a thorough evaluation of the school's work
- complete the external review of governance and devise a suitable action plan for improvements in response to the report
- make use of reports, publications and surveys available on Ofsted's website as examples of exemplary practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage and getting the school to good.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the interim deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your core improvement plan and action plans drafted by subject leaders. You and the interim deputy headteacher took me on a tour of the school during the morning session. I looked at examples of curriculum planning and records of children's learning.

Context

Following a short transition period for handover, you have replaced the interim headteacher as the substantive headteacher of the school. The management structure is under review. All teachers have recently taken on curriculum areas for which they are accountable.

Main findings

Staff and governors are responding quickly to the section 5 inspection and are able to show the early impact of some of the planned actions. The core plan focuses on strengthening teaching and learning and wisely includes consideration of staff's training needs. Planned actions are the right ones to move the school to good. To achieve them within a suitable timescale, progress checks have been set at regular points in the calendar. Even so, the intended goal that each objective will improve children's learning is not as obvious as it should be to guarantee that staff and governors do not lose sight of its purpose.

The interim deputy has completed valuable work in devising sensible and uncomplicated systems for checking children's progress. Their usefulness is soon to be tested out during the first round of pupil progress meetings involving all teachers, senior leaders and the local authority adviser.

Staff are engaging well with a new approach to curriculum planning with greater emphasis on accelerating children's learning based on information about their achievement. The whole-school focus on improving the range of questions asked of children as they play and explore is helping staff to make accurate judgements about the extent of their understanding. Teachers are working together sharing their strengths and expertise. They have just taken on responsibility for leading an aspect of the curriculum and have made a positive start in checking provision and how well children are learning. It will be important for them to evaluate their findings and unpick what needs to be done to improve practice and raise children's achievement.

The governing body has improved its capacity to govern the school well. All governors have received training and each governor is linked to a specific aspect of the school's work. They are sharing the workload fairly with improved understanding

of the part governors should play in checking the school's work and holding leaders to account. A full external review of governance is due imminently.

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

The local authority has played a pivotal role in securing suitable interim arrangements for the school's leadership and supporting the governing body through the recent recruitment process to appoint a new headteacher. It has undertaken a full audit of safeguarding arrangements with follow up visits to check that recommendations have been acted upon. Governors have benefited from a range of training and input from an experienced mentor who is supporting the Chair. The school improvement adviser is ensuring that you are receiving the right level of support as the school's new headteacher and is assisting you in reviewing the school's staffing structure. Staff work in partnership with other nursery schools and share good practice through regular meetings convened by the local authority. The school would also benefit from using examples of good practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage found on Ofsted's website.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector