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Mrs S Salmon  
Headteacher  
Knowle West Children's Centre and Nursery School  
Leinster Avenue  
Knowle West  
Bristol  
BS4 1NN

Dear Mrs Salmon

### **Short inspection of Knowle West Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 October 2015 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 good in January 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

- You are highly ambitious for the nursery school and your commitment to the children and families you serve is indisputable. Despite a significant expansion in provision, you have continued to build on the school's strengths. You and your team have maintained an extremely welcoming, caring and responsive culture. This enables children to thrive. It also helps parents and carers to develop a strong partnership with the school. There is a 'close, warm, and friendly feel' to the nursery school. This ensures that children and their parents and carers can confidently approach you with any problems or concerns they might have. You and your staff are very much at the heart of this local community and are highly respected within the wider city and beyond. Governors are fiercely proud of all you do and support you wholeheartedly in your developments and initiatives.
- Your team of practitioners, or 'key friends' as they are known in school, play a very strong role in the daily life of the nursery. A close partnership between 'key friends' and parents and carers ensures that the children thrive when they attend the nursery school.
- A key member of your team is Jake, the school dog. He plays a very important role in contributing to the family feel of the nursery school. By

welcoming the children each day, he ensures that they all feel secure, valued and very special!

- You have successfully tackled the areas that were identified at the last inspection as needing to improve. At the time of the last inspection there was an attainment gap between the lowest-performing children and their peers. Since that inspection, as a result of your initiatives, the attainment gap has narrowed considerably. This is because children who work at a level lower than their peers are given extra help in small groups. This enables them to rapidly build up their communication and language skills and also helps them to make better progress in other areas of learning. Individual sessions provide good support for those children who are disabled or have special educational needs. Practitioners plan activities that are meaningful to the children and reinforce key skills by working alongside them.
- The last inspection highlighted the need for you and your staff to extend and develop children's counting and calculation skills and to be able to practise them in the outdoor area. The outdoor area for the two- and three-year-olds successfully reflects the importance of these skills. For example, children are expected to use their understanding of the number system to park the numbered tricycles in order when they finish using them. Shelters and caves areas have been created to encourage children to use correct mathematical vocabulary when tackling problems such as 'going under', 'climbing over' and 'carrying heavy or light objects'. The young children particularly enjoy the challenges of the outdoor sand pit where they need to work out how deep objects must be buried before Jake can find them!
- Since the last inspection the outdoor area for the three- and four-year-olds now features a set of large painted numbers on the fence for the children. The meadow area has also been developed as a learning resource for counting and calculating skills. For example, children compare the growth of different shrubs and count the number of steps they take as they travel through the meadow. Children create tally charts of the different activities to record their work outside. Fun games, such as 'What's the time Mr Wolf?' are used well to promote children's counting skills and to help them understand the different times of the day. Nevertheless, planned activities to extend children's counting and calculating skills in this outdoor area are yet to be developed to their full potential.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

- The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. You and your governors understand how to recruit safely and staff are carefully vetted prior to employment. All staff have been trained and receive up-to-date news on

keeping children safe. Policies and procedures are strictly adhered to. For example, the policy of not using mobile phones in school is upheld by all staff.

- You and your team have created a safe haven for children, parents and carers. There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. This is promoted by the way in which you have built up very close professional relationships with other agencies, such as health workers and social services. Staff are well trained and keep a very close eye on the children. They get to know the families who attend the nursery school very well. Any concerns are always immediately followed up by the designated child protection lead practitioner. The nursery school benefits from being part of a children's centre. Staff are able to quickly access specialist help and advice.
- You have recently attended training promoted by the government to prevent extremism. You are already planning to share this information with all staff to ensure that they are fully aware of their responsibilities. In addition, by working closely with the community police, you are successfully promoting a harmonious community.

### **Inspection findings**

- Most children start nursery with speaking and listening skills, and personal, social and emotional development that are very limited. Their creative experiences and knowledge and understanding of the world around them are also very narrow. Year on year, more children are reaching age-related expectations by the time they leave the nursery school. This shows that children make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress from low starting points.
- Children enjoy their sessions at nursery school and develop confidence as they move around the various activities that are planned for them. 'Key friends' work alongside the children to help them gain confidence and develop their speaking and listening skills. In doing so, they support children to learn by asking questions, making suggestions when appropriate and recording children's progress. Although practitioners are continually seeking and developing ways to improve their teaching skills, they are not, as yet, making best use of snack time as an opportunity to extend children's learning. At these times, the children are not always encouraged to be engaged in the activity and sometimes become restless and bored.
- You and your team ensure that all children, regardless of their ability, ethnicity or special educational need, make good progress. This is because you carefully track and check the children's progress and plan small group activities to reinforce their learning. Your involvement in a research project, considering the attainment gap between boys and girls,

has made a valuable contribution to the way in which you carry out observations of the children's development. By changing your approach to the way you observe boys and noting the different ways they work and play, you have ensured that they learn at the same rate as the girls. The most-able children benefit from working in small groups, which helps to extend their learning. For example, games which help them to count in twos and threes deepen their understanding and use of number.

- The manner in which you work in close partnership with other agencies ensures that disadvantaged children receive the best possible care and support. Specialists who work at Knowle West Children's Centre are used extremely well to help both children and families access the appropriate guidance and support. This ensures that 'key friends' plan specific sessions to help individual children, including those with complex needs. Your sensitivity to the needs of disadvantaged children extends well beyond the boundaries of your nursery school. Jake has recently been busy visiting the children from your nursery who have just started at the local primary schools. This is helping them gain confidence and feel more secure in their new surroundings.
- Middle leaders demonstrate a reflective and thoughtful approach to their practice. The culture amongst them is one of continuous learning and development. They effectively demonstrate the impact of their own research on the children's outcomes. Middle leaders responsible for two-year-olds explained how they gained a wealth of ideas about how to develop the outdoor area and extend activities for the children to learn. However, this good practice has not been extended into the outdoor area for the three- and four-year-olds. This means that these children miss out on a wider range of outdoor learning experiences.
- A research project undertaken with a speech therapist has helped the middle leaders to gain a better understanding of the impact of their work in school. During the programme they were videoed working with children. The activity provided the possibility to review middle leaders' use of language and identify how improvements could be introduced. They all agree that this was a very powerful way to make improvements to their practice.
- You and your team are very proud of the way in which you value all members of your community. With the changing nature of your locality, you are proactively working alongside other partners. You celebrate and share the experiences of families new to this country and use the expertise of local artists to encourage joint projects within the community. The well-being of the children and their families is of paramount importance to the nursery school.
- Parents speak very highly of the nursery school and agree that all staff are very approachable. As one parent commented on the Parent View

website, 'I am really happy with the attention and consideration my son and I receive. I have recommended the school to friends and will continue to do so.'

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the outdoor area for the three- to four-year-olds is developed to promote and enhance children's learning
- practitioners make better use of snack time to develop and extend the children's communication and listening skills and promote their engagement and involvement.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and we discussed the school self-evaluation, information about the progress children were making and improvements since the last inspection. I also held discussions with your two deputy headteachers, the middle leaders, seven governors and a representative from the local authority. I accompanied one of your deputy headteachers to see the children learning and we looked at some of their learning journals together. Your deputy headteacher also shared evidence of the way that mathematical language is being developed successfully. I also viewed video evidence of positive feedback from parents and carers about the impact of the nursery school on their children's development. I met with a group of parents and talked to other parents during the school day. I looked at the survey results from 'Parent View' and considered the comments that had been placed on this website.