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Mrs Lynne Emery
Headteacher
Millfields Nursery School
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Dear Mrs Emery

Short inspection of Millfields Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The parents I spoke with during the inspection were overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. They particularly commended the staff for helping their children to become self-assured individuals. 'It is like being at home', and 'this nursery is my first and only choice' were commonly held views among the parents.

At the time of the last inspection, senior leaders were asked to increase children's independence by giving them the chance to talk about the activities they have completed and would like to do next. The actions you and leaders have taken in response to this have proved to be highly successful. Children speak enthusiastically about their learning and their work and enjoy talking about the choice of activities on offer. Adults sensitively support the children with limited vocabulary to express their opinions. For instance, children can select an object that represents the activity they would like to do, to let adults know what they are thinking. These children are also encouraged to use simple sentences to verbalise their thoughts.

You and your deputy headteacher keep a close check on children's learning. Your analysis shows that children make substantial gains with their early skills and abilities. Most children have the skills expected for their age by the end of their time in the Nursery. In some areas of learning almost half of the children are on track to exceed the early learning goals. Senior leaders recognise that for some children,

mathematical and scientific development is not as strong as other areas of learning. The school website keeps parents up to date with events and news. However, some of the school's documents on the website are not up to date. You acknowledge that further work is required in relation to both of these aspects.

You and the deputy headteacher work together exceedingly well. Together, you provide excellent leadership. You have successfully created an environment where staff want the best for every child and work together effectively to make sure this happens. Senior leaders, staff and governors promote the school's values through their daily encounters with children, parents, visitors and members of the community. Together, everyone ensures that your aim to help children 'play, learn and achieve together' is a reality for every child who attends Millfields.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the staff place a strong emphasis on making sure that children are safe and highlight the importance of this at every opportunity. As a consequence, children know how to look after themselves well. During a woodwork activity, for example, children enthusiastically took on the role of 'elves' making toys for Santa. They told me why it was imperative to wear safety goggles and to use the hammer carefully. Children adhere to the school rules and use 'walking legs' when they are inside. They move around carefully and sensibly. In the outside area, the children use play equipment with care and take it in turns to climb and move along the climbing apparatus.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are suitable and records relating to the children's safety are comprehensive. Senior leaders are uncompromising when it comes to making sure that children are safe. Any concerns are followed up promptly with external agencies to ensure that children and their families receive the necessary help and support.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders and governors have an accurate knowledge of the aspects of the school that are strong and those that need further improvement. You and the deputy headteacher continually reflect on what could be even better. Together with the staff you identify the actions that need to be taken to ensure that children's learning and teaching remain effective.
- The local authority often ask you and the deputy headteacher to provide support for other schools. The local authority representative I spoke with stated that this support has contributed to improvements in a number of early years settings.
- The members of the governing body use their expertise and experience well to fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively. Senior leaders provide them with helpful information about the achievement of different groups. This information enables governors to ask pertinent questions about the impact of the actions that staff are taking and the difference this is making to the children. Members of the governing body take an active part in the life of the school and help in any way that they can. Last year, for instance, they secured a substantial sum of money to improve the school grounds.

- My review of the school's documentation and discussions with senior leaders confirm that you are in the process of finalising the pupil premium plan for this academic year and that school policies are up to date. However, some of the school policies and information relating to pupil premium funding on the school website are not the most current. You and the governors intend to update the website imminently.
- Children of all abilities, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make excellent progress from their various starting points. This is because staff use the information they have about children's achievement to plan suitably challenging activities. Almost all children leave the Nursery on track to achieve a good level of development. Your information shows that since the previous inspection, the proportion of children exceeding the skills and knowledge expected for their age in some aspects has increased. Last year for example, just over half of the children were working beyond what is usually expected in communication and language.
- Senior leaders' detailed analysis of children's achievement shows that while children achieve exceptionally well overall, there are a few variations between the different areas of learning. Your information shows that some children could make even faster progress with their mathematical and scientific understanding. During the inspection, I found that while staff successfully promote skills such as speaking and writing, opportunities to develop children's mathematical and scientific skills are occasionally missed.
- The most able children achieve particularly well because staff regularly plan specific activities to extend their learning. In one example, the most able children were asked to transport water from one area of the school garden to another. This involved the children using items such as funnels and buckets to find the best way to carry the water, investigating different options and coming up with the best method of carrying the most water. This activity made a strong contribution to children's understanding of different objects and enhanced their ability to solve problems.
- Disadvantaged children benefit from personalised support and the opportunity to take part in activities that build effectively on what they already know. Additionally, senior leaders and governors frequently check that the extra help is having maximum impact on children's learning so that activities can be adapted quickly. School records show that these children are on course to achieve as well as children nationally by the time they leave the Nursery.
- Day-care provision for two-year-olds is located in the same building as Millfields Nursery. Senior leaders and staff from both settings work closely together to ensure that all children gain from purposeful activities that make a valuable impact on children's personal and academic development. Parents whose children have attended both settings could not speak highly enough of the difference staff had made to their children. 'I could not be happier, my child has grown in confidence,' commented one parent.
- Children enjoy the many opportunities to work together. Staff encourage the children to share ideas, be creative and use their imagination. During the inspection, a group of children worked together to build a pirate ship. They told me that the ship was going to the jungle in search of treasure. Part-way through the journey, the children decided that the ship should have a Christmas tree.

They very quickly gathered the necessary resources and began to design and make the tree. Throughout this process, the children listened carefully, talked about their ideas with confidence, and used a variety of materials to create a magnificent pirate ship with a shining Christmas tree.

- Children enjoy listening to poems and stories. They are keen to talk about different stories and describe what the illustrations show. Staff extend the most able children effectively by helping them to correctly name and sound out letters.
- From a very early age, children learn the importance of helping others. Throughout the year staff encourage children and their families to raise money for good causes. In one instance, the children took inspiration from a member of staff who ran a marathon in support of a national charity. The children ran their own mini-marathon to show their support.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- adults give all children the opportunity to further develop their mathematical and scientific skills
- the school policies and the information about pupil premium expenditure is up to date on the school's website.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the chair of the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative. You joined me on visits to all groups of children. I spoke with parents at various points during the day. I spoke with children throughout the school day. I reviewed a range of documentation including photographs about children's learning, information relating to keeping children safe, and the school's own evaluation of its work. This inspection focused particularly on how well staff help children to be independent and the information available to parents on the school website.