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Mrs Jennifer Ward
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ward

Short inspection of Sandbank Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 2017, 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

You and the deputy headteacher have maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

As a result, children continue to achieve very well and flourish in their personal development. At the heart of the school's success has been the way you and the deputy headteacher have continued to promote an excellent standard of teaching and learning. You have developed an exciting curriculum which fully captures the children's interest. During my visit, this high level of interest could be seen when children thoughtfully experimented with different colours of paint and when they maintained their balance as they tried to carefully walk across the bridge they had constructed. Children's imaginations were captured when they rushed to take on the role of a doctor to look after an injured 'patient'.

You and the deputy headteacher have also ensured that all staff promote a very high standard of care for every child. This high level of support for everyone's well-being has created a school where children feel very secure and are able to rapidly grow in confidence. Parents recognise this, and a typical comment was 'My child has come out of her shell in the short time she has been here.' The high standard of care, along with the excellent teaching, plays a major role in promoting the children's fast rates of progress. Children feel very safe at the school and parents spoke confidently about the care that staff provide. Parent comments included, 'The staff go above and beyond for my child' and, 'They treat our children as if they were

their own.'

Stimulating activities and high levels of care also help to promote excellent standards of behaviour. Incidents of unwanted behaviour are very rare. Staff sensitively guide children so that they interact very well with one another and also help children calmly manage their feelings. Interactions with children are always warm and accompanied by a nurturing smile. Staff act as excellent role models. As a result, the children's social and emotional development is well promoted.

You and the deputy headteacher keep a careful watch on the school's performance. You are very aware of its strengths and have high expectations of the staff's performance, reflecting your determined efforts to maintain the school's high standards. You continue to make improvements and are working with another member of staff to check and develop the quality of the questions that are asked of the children.

Since the last inspection, you and the deputy headteacher have successfully improved the quality of teaching and the children's learning in the outside area. The outdoor learning area provides a wide range of activities that promote fast rates of progress across all the areas of the curriculum. When learning outside, children are always fully absorbed and challenged by the activities that are provided. Children also are encouraged to develop their learning in ways that interest them. You have also extended opportunities for learning outside through regular visits to an allotment where children can grow plants.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other leaders have ensured that the school's safeguarding practice is very effective and is at the centre of the school's work. Key policies meet statutory requirements and are understood by members of staff. All staff receive training and frequent updates, with a recent focus on the 'Prevent' duty, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Safeguarding training also features highly in induction training for new staff and training for students undertaking placements.

Leaders have ensured that staff are quick to share concerns with those responsible for safeguarding. Leaders' clear understanding of local safeguarding needs helps them to act quickly to provide a high level of support for families directly themselves or through other agencies. Governors are very aware of their role in promoting safeguarding and make all of the necessary checks on the work of leaders to ensure that children are kept safe.

Inspection findings

- The children's starting points when joining the school continue to be well below what are typical for their age. Excellent teaching and stimulating activities, combined with high levels of care, mean that children make rapid progress in almost all areas of the curriculum. By the end of the Nursery Year, a very large majority of children reach expectations that are typical for their age. A significant

minority of children make such accelerated progress that they exceed the expectations that are typical for their age in almost all areas. Children make particularly fast progress in their communication and language skills, their physical development, their personal, social and emotional development and their understanding of the world. The deputy headteacher carefully checks the progress made by cohorts and individuals. The help she provides to staff to focus on the needs of individuals has played an important role in ensuring that children achieve so well. Children's progress in reading and writing is not quite as fast as it is in the other areas. By the end of the Nursery Year, fewer children exceed the expectations typical for their age when compared to the other subjects. This is because opportunities to apply children's quickly developing language skills to reading and writing activities are sometimes missed.

- Plans to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged children have been very successful. Leaders have identified an imaginative range of activities that are adapted each year in response to the different needs of the children. These include musical activities and an increased number of educational visits to widen the experiences of disadvantaged children. As a result, the difference between the outcomes for disadvantaged children and those achieved by other children has significantly diminished each year. This has particularly been the case in the areas of communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, mathematics and understanding the world.
- The small number of children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are very well supported. With the help of the deputy headteacher, staff are quick to identify the need for extra support. Carefully chosen activities allow children who have SEN and/or disabilities to learn alongside other children. The deputy headteacher works effectively with external organisations and parents to ensure that the school fully supports this group of pupils.
- The curriculum is another significant strength. Activities are interesting and imaginatively planned. The children's enjoyment is very apparent as, for example, they take part in potato printing and making pizzas. Activities provide the levels of challenge and the breadth of experiences that ensure that children make rapid progress. Children experience a particularly wide range of trips that are selected well to help promote rapid learning and development. Parents value the contributions these trips make but also speak of their affordability.
- Governors continue to show a high level of commitment to their roles and to maintaining the school's happy ethos. Governors keep a careful watch, through discussions with leaders, over the progress children make. They take particular interest in checking on the use of funding to ensure that disadvantaged children achieve well and on the quality of support staff provide for children who have SEN and/or disabilities. Governors keep a close check on finances. In a few places, governors have not yet systematically evaluated aspects of the school's work, such as the views of parents and how the curriculum promotes British values.
- Leaders have ensured that staff have formed a close working partnership with parents. From the moment their children start school, parents are very involved in their children's learning and have opportunities to share information about

their children's achievements with staff. Parents indicate that they are very well informed about their children's progress and well guided in how they can help their children in a wide range of ways. Parents also say that staff communicate very well with them and are approachable.

- The school promotes British values through its ethos and curriculum. Efforts to develop respect and tolerance of other cultures is a strength in this area of work. For example, children enjoyed learning about Diwali through dressing up, listening to and playing the dhol drum and eating traditional Indian food. Chinese New Year is also celebrated, along with a range of other festivals of modern multicultural Britain.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children make even faster progress in reading and writing by making certain that these skills are better developed across the range of classroom activities
- governors' systematic and detailed checks are spread across all areas of the school's performance.

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

Jonathan Moore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher. I had conversations with a wide range of staff. I talked with children while they were playing. I met with four governors and talked with a representative from the local authority. I analysed responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and talked to parents. I conducted learning walks during the morning and afternoon session with both you and the deputy headteacher in both classes. I looked at learning journals and other assessment information. I examined the school's self-evaluation and development plan, documents relating to the early years pupil premium, support plans for children who have SEN and/or disabilities, governing body minutes and safeguarding and child protection records.