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Miss Emma Smith  
Headteacher  
Bilston Nursery School  
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Dear Miss Smith

### **Short inspection of Bilston Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 2018, 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 February 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, the deputy headteacher, staff and governors have high expectations of the children.

You are a dynamic leader who is continually reflecting on how to ensure that children have an excellent start to their education. You lead an effective team of adults who make sure that the activities they plan support children's learning and development successfully. As a consequence, children make excellent progress and leave the school fully equipped to start the Reception Year. The children are exceptionally well behaved, confident and inquisitive learners.

Most children join the school with skills and knowledge that are below those expected for their age, especially in reading, writing, speaking and number. To help children make rapid progress by the time they leave the school, staff rightly place a strong emphasis on developing children's skills and knowledge in these areas of learning. On a daily basis, children are immersed in fun and memorable reading, writing and number activities. There are, however, occasions when the staff who work with the youngest children miss opportunities to enhance children's speaking skills.

Parents and carers are highly appreciative of the care you and your staff show towards their children and the exciting learning opportunities on offer. 'Staff are allowing and pushing my child to develop further', wrote one parent who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire. This view was shared with many parents I spoke

with during the inspection. 'Learning is fun' and 'My child has come on leaps and bounds' were just some of the views conveyed by parents.

In September 2017, the governing bodies of Bilston Nursery School and Eastfield Nursery School federated. Governors are effective in carrying out their roles and responsibilities. They use their visits to the school to provide you and other leaders with robust challenge around aspects such as the achievement of children in mathematics. At the time of the previous inspection, governors were asked to provide parents with more information about their work, and their impact in helping the school to improve. Governors use the school newsletter as a forum for providing parents with information about themselves and their work. Members of the governing body also make sure they are available to speak with parents during parents' evenings and other school events. The recently federated governing body is particularly keen to increase parental involvement in the work of the school. They are considering ways in which they can give parents more opportunities to share their views and ideas for improvement.

Following the last inspection, you were also asked to help children further develop their technological skills. The actions you and the staff have taken in response to this have been effective. Children learn to programme simple robots, use the basic functions of a computer mouse, and operate toys so that they light up, move and make sounds. The school's artist in residence has made an excellent contribution towards developing children's technological skills. The artist has, for instance, successfully helped children to use cameras and video recorders to create a range of video animations. For example, 'The land that tidy up time forgot' animation shows a group of 'dinosaurs' moving around and over wooden blocks until they form an orderly group.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is strong culture of safeguarding. Through 'risky play', staff teach children how to keep safe. For example, when toasting marshmallows, carving sticks and building structures in the forest school, children learn how to use tools safely. The outdoor areas are fun and inspire children to explore and investigate their surroundings. The play equipment and the outdoor spaces have been carefully designed so that children learn to climb, jump, roll, balance and move with care.

Leaders ensure that the arrangements for keeping children safe are fit for purpose. Staff are aware of any indications of potential risk. For instance, they keep a close check on any changes in children's behaviour and attendance and make sure that they report concerns to the relevant person. Members of the governing body review the school's systems and procedures regularly. They undertake their own health and safety walks and check that any potential issues are resolved quickly. The parents I spoke with during the inspection were complimentary about the welfare and safety of their children.

## Inspection findings

- You and the deputy headteacher have an exceptional understanding of how young children learn and their interests. You ensure that staff take account of this when planning activities and projects. As a consequence, children of different abilities make rapid progress and show high levels of interest and concentration.
- Once a week, children take part in 'project day'. The children have the chance to take on different roles. In one example, children became 'superheroes and spies'. They used their investigative skills to search for the 'creature' in the school garden. Once the 'creature' was found they worked together to design and make it a home. Projects such as this successfully promote children's curiosity and imagination, and they have a beneficial impact on children's social development.
- Opportunities for two-, three- and four-year-old children to develop their writing and number skills are widespread and integrated fully into the activities led by adults and the activities that children choose for themselves. Children use marks to express their ideas, with some attempting to write simple words. They confidently count a small number of objects, correctly name basic shapes, and use appropriate words and phrases to describe the size of different items.
- During the inspection, a group of children were thoroughly enjoying retelling the story, 'We're going on a bear hunt'. As the children sculpted the playdough into the shape of a bear, the teacher skilfully used questions to encourage the children to use appropriate vocabulary to describe the bear and to recall key events in the story. Staff sometimes miss the chance to help the youngest children in the school to move on from using simple words to simple phrases and sentences when talking to an adult or their classmates.
- With valuable support from your school improvement adviser, you have refined the way in which you track the progress of different groups of children. You use this information well to identify any gaps in the knowledge and skills of disadvantaged children and to plan appropriate support. These children have benefited greatly from visits to the local library, storytelling workshops, and additional help with reading, writing and number. Your latest information shows that differences between the knowledge, skills and understanding of disadvantaged children and other children are diminishing quickly.
- As the headteacher of Bilston Nursery School and Eastfield Nursery School, you have appointed leaders and teachers with specific skills to work across both settings. These staff ensure that different groups of children make strong gains in their learning. A leader with responsibility for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, for instance, makes sure that the needs of these children are identified quickly and that they receive personalised support. Some of the parents I spoke with were highly complimentary about the individual assistance for their children and the positive difference this was making to their children's learning and confidence.
- The classrooms and outdoor areas are transformed regularly so that children have access to a wide range of high-quality resources to support their learning. Children look forward with excitement to the wonderland of activities on offer, for example building castles for giants, making potions in the mud kitchen, baking

biscuits for special occasions, and mixing paint to create snowflake patterns. The school allotments are particularly popular. Photographs show children growing, harvesting, and using the fruit and vegetables from the garden areas when cooking.

- You and the deputy headteacher are often called upon by the local authority to help teachers in other early years settings to improve outcomes for children in the city. In addition to this, you have empowered staff at Bilston to share effective practice with staff from other schools.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the youngest children have more opportunities to develop, practise and extend their speaking skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the chair of the governing body and one other governor. I also met with the local authority school improvement adviser. I spoke with parents as they arrived at school with their children. You and the deputy headteacher joined me during observations of children learning. We spoke to children and observed activities in the classrooms and the outside areas. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation of its work, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's achievement information, and information relating to safeguarding. I considered the eight written responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey and the eight responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.