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Mrs P French and Mr M Caldwell
Acting headteachers
Iminster Avenue Specialist Nursery School
Iminster Avenue
Knowle West
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Dear Mrs French and Mr Caldwell

Short inspection of Iminster Avenue Specialist Nursery School

Following my visit to the nursery school on 18 January 2018 with Claire Mirams, Ofsted Inspector, 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 nursery school was judged to be good in July 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the nursery school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection.

There is no change to the nursery school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.

This unique setting provides both mainstream nursery education and also specialist provision for children, aged from two to seven, who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Proudly promoting a vision which highlights its commitment to a shared moral purpose, community involvement and partnership working, it ensures that all children are fully included in the life of the nursery school. Teachers, early years practitioners and other specialist staff all work closely together to meet and support the needs of each individual child. Relationships between staff and the children they care for are warm and supportive.

Since the previous inspection, the nursery school has experienced much change in its leadership and management. This has meant that actions for improvement identified at that time have not been dealt with fully. Nevertheless, since your secondments from Knowle Children's Centre and Nursery School and New Fosseway Special School, you are both providing strong and strategic leadership. As acting headteachers, you have quickly got to grips with the areas that need improving. The way in which you both work closely together and also lead with your specific areas of expertise has been pivotal to the recent improvements in provision. You are both providing high-quality professional development which is effective in supporting all members of staff. This is not only raising their levels of confidence

but also strengthening the school's capacity for improvement.

Parents and carers whose children attend the nursery school praise the school strongly. As one parent commented on the online inspection questionnaire, 'I have nothing but good, positive things to say about the nursery'. Parents of those children who attend the specialist provision appreciate the tailored support their children receive. One parent summed up their views by explaining, 'Ilminster Nursery is a wonderful inclusive school that puts every child first'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is effective. Arrangements are secure and all children are kept safe and well cared for.

Following your secondments, you both quickly became aware that safeguarding was not as robust as it should be. You wasted no time in commissioning a safeguarding audit and rapidly responded to its recommendations. You have ensured that all staff and governors have received rigorous safeguarding training. You have made sure that policies and processes are securely in place and everyone is clear about their role. As a consequence, staff are vigilant and report any concerns they have to the designated leaders for safeguarding.

You have both also implemented numerous improvements to school routines and systems. For example, those children who require specialist arrangements during meal times have detailed feeding plans. This ensures that their differing needs are fully met and, for example, that they are never in danger of choking. The induction of new staff is very thorough and this ensures that they are clear about their responsibility for safeguarding the children in their care.

Governors are aware of their responsibility for safeguarding. For example, governors who interview potential members of staff have participated in recent training about safer recruitment.

Children happily come to the nursery and parents report that their children feel safe and secure. Occasionally, when adult expectations are not high enough, children do not behave in the safest way.

Inspection findings

- The newly established middle leadership roles, which you have created, are in the early stages of development. You are fully aware that these new leaders need to gain a precise understanding of their roles and receive appropriate training.
- You recognise that not all groups of children make the progress they are capable of. Children in the specialist provision make strong progress from their starting points because they are given individualised tailored support to meet their specific needs. The effective assessment systems used at New Fosseway Special School have been adopted in the specialist classes to check how well individual children are learning. Teaching staff use this well to plan for the next steps in the

children's learning. There are high expectations of what the children with SEN and/or disabilities are capable of achieving.

- In contrast, expectations of the teaching staff in the mainstream classes are not high enough. For example, not all teaching staff encourage children to develop their speaking skills by modelling full sentences and extending their vocabulary. They too readily accept the careless and inappropriate use of learning resources. As a result, children's mishandling of equipment such as puzzles and bicycles goes unchecked.
- In the mainstream nursery classes, there are no consistent systems to check and track how well individual children are making progress. Consequently, children, particularly the most able, are not given sufficient opportunities to extend their learning. For example, too frequently adults ask the children a question but provide the answer before the children have had a chance to reply.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the newly created middle leadership roles are defined, developed and supported so that they can contribute effectively to sustaining the future of the nursery school
- the expectations of those members of staff who teach in the mainstream nursery classes are raised so that all groups of children, including the most able, are sufficiently challenged and engaged purposefully in appropriate activities
- suitable assessment systems are developed in the mainstream nursery classes so that children's progress can be carefully checked and tracked to ensure that appropriate work is planned for them.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

During this inspection, I met with you both to discuss the school's effectiveness. I had discussions with middle leaders and governors, including the chair of the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with a local authority officer and met your headteachers from Knowle West Children's Centre and Nursery School and New Fosseyway Special School. We visited the classrooms together and observed the teaching and learning. We examined documents, including information about the safeguarding of children, and information about their progress. We also discussed the school's self-evaluation document and improvement plan. We considered 14 responses to Parent View, including additional comments which were made by free text, and spoke with some parents to ascertain their views of the nursery school.