

12 July 2018

Mrs Lesley Harris  
Headteacher  
Weoley Castle Nursery School  
109 Weoley Castle Road  
Weoley Castle  
Birmingham  
West Midlands  
B29 5QD

Dear Mrs Harris

### **Short inspection of Weoley Castle Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 June 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 December 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In fact, the school has built further on its many strengths and provides children with an exceptionally positive early experience of education. You and your team ensure that the standard of teaching and learning is top notch and the level of care is second to none. Consequently, children settle in quickly, make excellent progress and are happy and safe at school. There is no doubt that this school nurtures children, builds their confidence and gives them exactly what they need to help their learning now and in later years.

Since the previous inspection, the number of children attending Weoley Castle Nursery School has grown considerably. A reorganisation of local provision means that the school now caters for children between the ages of two and five years old on three separate sites. Understandably, as a result of these changes, your staff team has also grown and a new leadership structure has been put in place.

You have managed all of these changes with a clear-sighted and calm sense of purpose, which staff, governors and parents say is typical of your approach. Furthermore, you and the governors have built up the leadership skills of others on the team by giving praise and encouragement when deserved, and helpful steers, support and training when needed. You exercise wise judgement that inspires trust and loyalty from staff and parents alike. Indeed, both staff and parents express high levels of confidence in the school's work and its leadership. They know that leaders' decisions are made in the best interests of the children.

The previous inspection recommended that the school could do more to develop children's communication skills. I found this focus to be woven through every aspect of the curriculum. Your attention to developing children's early speaking and listening skills cannot be faulted.

Looking to the future, you and the governors are considering the next phase of the school's development. Already, a building project is underway and decisions about links with other providers are currently under discussion. Whatever decision you reach, I recommend that you continue to explore ways to share the outstanding practice that is evident on all three of your school sites.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's procedures for keeping children safe are excellent. All staff have a very clear understanding of their responsibilities and duty of care for children. On all three sites, there are numerous signs and messages on display that remind staff and parents about what to do in response to a concern about a child's safety or well-being. These help to keep safeguarding at the forefront of everyone's thinking and reinforce the school's expectations for looking after children and treating them fairly. Indeed, when any concerns about children's safety arise, staff act swiftly and properly. Information about children's welfare and circumstances is handled with sensitivity and stored securely. However, it is also shared with other professionals when necessary so that the right help can be put in place.

Staff keep a careful watch for any changes in children's behaviour or attendance. For instance, staff follow up unexpected absences by contacting parents or making home visits to check all is okay. Leaders also examine accident records in order to spot any patterns, which can then be followed up as needs be.

Medicines and first-aid materials are stored correctly and readily available when required. In classrooms, health and safety checklists are used every day in order to keep areas clean, tidy and safe for children and adults.

The school works closely with a range of different organisations in order to provide appropriate support to children and, when needs be, their families. This help is appreciated by parents, and helps to strengthen the bond of trust between home and school.

Staff training is up to date and the central record of checks on employees and other adults in school is maintained correctly.

### **Inspection findings**

- Adults are excellent role models for the children in their care. They are attentive to children's ideas, show concern for others and aim for excellence. This is all the result of consistently strong leadership.
- You instil a sense of calm purpose, which permeates all aspects of the school's work. Staff are open to new ideas and willingly share their practice with

colleagues because of the supportive and reflective culture in the school. You and the governors have a keen eye for staff talent and a proven ability to get the best from people. Everyone on your leadership team works for the good of all with strict professionalism, ambition and good-humoured common sense.

- The vast majority of children start school with a level of knowledge and skills below that typical for their age. Their range of pre-school experiences and their communication and physical skills are often limited. In response, you have designed a curriculum and approach that targets these particular needs. From the moment children arrive in the morning they are immersed in language-rich activities. Adults use jolly encouragement and purposeful questions that prompt children to talk, sing, explain and discuss. Whether watering plants in the outdoor herb garden, making letter shapes from modelling clay or enjoying a story, rhyme or song, children have plenty of reasons to use their voices and explore the sounds and meanings of words. Furthermore, the expansion of the school has helped to strengthen the progression across your early years curriculum. For instance, staff in each year group know what they are aiming to achieve for the children, not just in the short term but in the years ahead. This is because they regularly meet with colleagues to discuss classroom practice and check one another's assessments of what children can do. This has served to raise expectations even higher, both for staff and children. Consequently, classroom practice has gone from strength to strength. The excellent teaching and cracking progress seen in the last two Ofsted inspections are still going on now. Children are given the very best start possible because the curriculum is tailored to their needs and delivered with enthusiasm and flair.
- Classroom activities aim to build on children's interests and fascinations while also introducing them to new experiences. Early years pupil premium money, for example, is used to fund a forest school area and a specialist teacher. Through this outdoor work, children explore, learn to take responsibility and use nature to stimulate new learning. Just recently, children discovered a frog in the long grass. For many, this was a brand new experience and adults were quick to seize upon it to plan further learning about life and habitats. Similarly, children's fascination with a bunch of flowers delivered by a parent was used to help them think scientifically and develop an interest in the world around them. In addition, staff often take children out and about in the local area or further afield in order to broaden their horizons and fuel their imaginations.
- Children who find it hard to settle in school or to cope with certain situations receive attentive expert support. In addition, you provide targeted help to children who have been disturbed by difficult situations or experiences outside of school. The solution-focused attitude of your staff team means that such support is managed in highly effective ways and parents are given constructive advice. This helps children to be composed at school, enjoy learning and grow in confidence.
- The school has a very strong partnership with parents. During this inspection, I observed parents bringing their children into school and then staying to watch them settle or to chat with staff. There was a relaxed, yet purposeful and productive air to the whole situation. Parents, staff and children were all comfortable and at ease with one another and a sense of busy focused activity

was apparent. Smiles and good-natured conversations were underpinned by a total respect for the rules and trust in the staff. The parents I spoke to reported that this was typical and that the school has done wonders for their children. Responses to Parent View followed a similar theme and 100% of respondents would recommend this school to other parents.

- This trust in the school is well founded and the school puts thought and effort into keeping parents informed. Staff are on hand at the start and end of the day to chat with parents and have put on special workshops or information events to help parents find out more about their children's education. On a day-to-day basis, staff also provide helpful tips about how to inject learning into daily household activities such as climbing the stairs, making a list, or going shopping. Parents appreciate this guidance and support and the friendly approachability of the school's staff and leaders.
- Currently, you and the governors are considering a new phase of development for the school. The governors are adamant that the decisions they make must help to improve provision for local children. To this end, they are looking at ways to widen the reach of the excellent practice in their school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to explore ways to share more widely the outstanding practice that is evident in your school.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders. I also met with the school's office manager and two governors. I carried out short observations in different areas of the school and looked at children's work and records of their progress.

By the end of the inspection, there were 28 responses on Parent View and five free-text responses. I took account of these and spoke with some parents at the beginning of the day. I also took note of the eight responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

I looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own evaluation of its performance, information about the work of governors, analysis of behaviour and accident patterns, staff training records, information provided for parents and several school policy documents. I also checked the school's website, the central record of checks on staff and the procedures for keeping children safe. I asked members of staff and parents about safeguarding matters.