

23 July 2018

Mrs Cathy Bednal
Headteacher
Ripley Nursery School
Sandham Lane
Ripley
Derbyshire
DE5 3HE

Dear Mrs Bednal

Short inspection of Ripley Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 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 good in January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Ripley Nursery is an exciting and engaging learning environment that makes children want to come to school to learn. Wall displays are vibrant and a large range of different activities kindle children's interests. You monitor the quality of teaching well and see that staff are showing children effectively how to, for example, count one more or one less, in effective ways so that children can remember and use this knowledge. You have high expectations for every child and are determined that no time will be lost. In a single session, I saw how children were learning, for instance, to write the things they will take on a summer holiday, how to use a bat and ball, and how make a collage of a seaside scene with pebbles.

You have ensured that teaching is of a consistently good standard. Staff are caring and kind, so children settle in quickly. They know children well and ask them appropriate and challenging questions. For example, I saw them asking children why warm water might be good to melt ice, but why boiling water could be dangerous. Children thought about this and explained how boiling water might burn their hands. Staff also describe things well to children. This helps to improve children's vocabulary and self-confidence over time because they have the language skills to explain what they are thinking. This is enhanced because children can see that staff want to hear what they have to say. Staff also excite children's interest in reading, showing them exciting books and reading them stories together in a way that makes them want to join in.

The generous outdoor area is stimulating and well used so that children can, for instance, explore the grounds together, construct their own obstacle courses using planks and wooden blocks, and play ball games. Children look after the environment, making sure that the flowers are watered and that materials are put away sensibly at the end of an activity or at lunchtimes.

Unsurprisingly, the school and its staff have the strong support of parents and carers. All of those who responded to Parent View would recommend it to others, stating that their children are happy and safe there, and make good progress because of being well taught. One parent reflected the views of others by explaining, 'My child is always very keen to tell me what she has done during the day, from going to the allotment, to bird-spotting, to making ice-cream. Staff are very approachable. I am really impressed how they have prepared her for her next school.'

You have attended effectively to the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. Staff ensure that children of different abilities have good levels of challenge and give the most able children things to learn that are more difficult. These include teaching them to tell the time using an analogue clock, or how to segment sounds. On occasions, staff will then ask these children to teach others what they have learned. Staff also give all children clear instructions and explain why they must listen carefully to what others say. As a result, children do not call out inappropriately, but pay close attention. You have also trained staff at lunchtime well so that children's behaviour at lunchtime is as good as it is during the morning and afternoon sessions. I saw for myself how children were well supervised using the climbing equipment, while others were happily playing hide and seek together.

You have worked well with the local authority to improve how you collect and use information about children's achievements. You are using this data to help you improve teaching in areas where children make less rapid progress, or where they do not attain as highly. For example, at the end of summer 2017, you noted that children were making less progress in their reading, compared with other areas. You ensured that staff received good training so that they improved how they read books to children, as well as how they teach early phonic skills. As a result, the proportion of children leaving Nursery this year attaining well in reading has improved. You are aware, however, that attainment in writing remains lower and that, as a result, this will be a focus for the next school year.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a clear understanding from all staff of their responsibility to do all they can to protect children. Staff have received good and regular training so that they are aware of the many different signs that a child may be being harmed. Good communication between staff means that they do not hesitate to discuss any concerns they have and report their concerns to you without delay. You keep appropriate and detailed records and do not hesitate to make a referral to external agencies if this is needed. You and staff also work closely with the Ripley cluster of schools and, for example,

health visitors, to support vulnerable children and their families.

All parents whom I met during my visit and who responded to Parent View confirmed that the school keeps their children safe. Children themselves feel safe in school and take care not to hurt others. Staff teach them that they should tell someone to stop if they are ever upset or hurt, and to inform an adult they trust. Staff also teach children well about risks and how to manage them. For example, I saw children learning for the first time how, under close supervision, to carefully and safely knock nails into blocks of wood using a hammer.

Inspection findings

- Children are very interested in the many activities that staff organise for them. Staff ensure that the early years curriculum is appropriately covered and make and adapt their plans based on children's interests. For example, some boys showed a great interest in dinosaurs, so staff planned a wide range of activities around this so that children could find out more about them.
- Children are encouraged to become independent over time. Staff show them how to, for example, clean their hands before eating a snack, put on their boots and coats, and peel their own fruit. Once children have learned, they are expected to do these things for themselves. Children are also given tasks such as taking a message or equipment to others, or feeding Rosie, Twinkle and Holly, the school's chickens. This makes children feel valued and realise the things they are capable of doing which, in turn, makes them keen to learn more.
- Staff quickly identify those children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. They give them good support so that the curriculum they receive is appropriate for their needs and they make good gains from their starting points. Staff monitor the progress of these children well and keep their parents informed of what their children are achieving.
- Transition arrangements are effective. As a result, staff know details about what children can do, and their needs, before children arrive. When children are moving on to their next school, staff pass on good levels of information to the teachers who will receive them so that these teachers can give them appropriately challenging work in Reception Year.
- Most children enter Nursery with skills that are below, or well below, those typically found. By the time they leave, a large majority of children overall are working at or beyond the expectations for their age across almost all areas of learning. The longer children attend the school, the better their attainment is. However, some children, including around half of disadvantaged children, have not fully caught up with others nationally in their writing by the time they leave.
- Children's learning journals, which are highly prized by both parents and the children themselves, confirm that children, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, make good progress.
- Children's positive attitudes to each other and to their work mean that they are well prepared for their next school. As a result of good modelling by staff, children are polite, caring and respectful. They are aware of each other's feelings

and are keen to tell adults what they are learning or thinking.

- You and senior leaders have rightly assessed the school to be good from a wide range of evidence. Previous school development plans have been implemented well to bring about the impact you and staff intended. You have already identified that children do not make sufficiently rapid progress in writing because staff do not show them sufficiently well how adults write. You have plans to address this aspect in the next academic year.
- The governing body plays an effective strategic role in holding senior leaders to account. They note the detailed information you give them, but then check its accuracy by visiting the school and looking at examples of the things children learn. They have a clear understanding of the progress of different groups of children and share your high expectations for each child to make rapid progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children's progress in writing accelerates so that a large majority of children, including those who are disadvantaged, leave the school with skills in writing that are broadly in line with those typically found in other children of the same age.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with the chair of the governing body, the assistant headteacher and the lead teacher for learning in the forest area. I considered the responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, read all free-text comments and met with parents at lunchtime. I considered the responses from staff to Ofsted's questionnaire regarding their views of the school and its leadership. We visited all learning areas together and I looked at many samples of children's work in their learning journals and on display. I observed children's behaviour in lessons and during lunchtime. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and their plans for its further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.