

25 September 2018

Mrs Mandy Cryan
Headteacher
Lillian de Lissa Nursery School
Bellevue
Birmingham
West Midlands
B5 7LX

Dear Mrs Cryan

Short inspection of Lillian de Lissa Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since the last inspection, the school has undergone significant changes as a result of financial constraints. All children transferred to the main site in January 2018 following the closure of one of the nursery sites. The number of two-year-old children attending the nursery has increased considerably over the last year. The role of deputy headteacher is now shared between two members of staff. The school is currently in the process of federating with 11 other nursery schools across the city of Birmingham. You and the governors have been highly effective in managing the changes, seeing them as exciting opportunities for further development. There is a comprehensive vision for the future of the school.

Leadership is a key strength of the school. It is dynamic and has further strengthened since the last inspection. Leaders have an exceptionally well-developed understanding of every aspect of school performance. You and the deputy headteachers are highly reflective and constantly seek ways to improve the learning experience for every child. You have further developed the curriculum, which is now focused on children's interests rather than topics. This engages them quickly in their learning and stimulates their curiosity. During my visit, the focus on

learning through exploration and discovery was palpable and evident in every corner of the nursery.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to increase the proportion of children reaching and exceeding the levels of development typical for their age by the time they leave the nursery. You were also asked to make sure that all children have the opportunity to contribute to discussions in order to develop their language and understanding. Together with the deputy headteachers, you have driven huge improvements in these areas. Your determination for excellence is not only about nurturing the whole child but ensuring that they achieve at the highest standards possible. You are passionate about providing children with an excellent start to their education. You provide a clear direction and have cultivated a collective responsibility among all staff. They share your vision. Everyone understands the role they play in ensuring that every child flourishes. You and senior leaders raised staff expectations of what children can do. As a result, significantly more pupils leave the nursery reaching and exceeding the expectations for their age. The focus on educational achievement is now a strong thread running through every aspect of the nursery.

After the last inspection, leaders were also asked to improve the accuracy of assessment. This has been fully addressed via a range of appropriate strategies. As a result, the accuracy of assessment has improved and expectations of what children can do have been raised.

Exceptionally high levels of professionalism from every member of staff ensure that no moment of learning is lost. Staff are committed and highly skilled. They have a very good understanding of how young children learn. They support, encourage and challenge children in all situations. You provide high-quality training and regular opportunities to discuss children's progress. This ensures consistency and high expectations from everyone.

Delightful relationships exist between children and with adults. Behaviour is excellent. Children happily play alongside each other or together, talking about what they are doing. They develop confidence and independence from the outset. Children quickly know what is expected and follow routines and instructions well. For example, two-year-olds join in the tidy up song, showing their empty hands and pointing to their eyes at the word 'look.'

Parents are extremely supportive of the school. They acknowledge and appreciate the work that you do to support them and their children. They comment on the inclusive nature of the school. Some describe it as their second home, while others talk about the amazing progress their children make. Parents say that you make sure their children are very well cared for and safe. As your mission statement explains, you and your staff certainly 'value every child's story'.

Governors have further deepened their understanding of all aspects of school performance. They regularly monitor and evaluate the impact of the actions you have taken. Your new data report enables them to ask challenging questions. They

fully understand the outcomes for different groups of pupils, such as those in receipt of the early years pupil premium. Governors state confidently that 'No ceiling is put on what we do for our children. We want the very best for them all of the time.' They place a high priority on the development of all staff. Governors are keen to grow and develop leadership at all levels, believing this to be the key to ensuring the future success of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is an extremely strong safeguarding culture across the whole school. Leaders and governors have continued to ensure that keeping children safe is central to their work and given highest priority. Since the closure of the local children's centre, the school has become the 'go to place' when parents are struggling with a range of issues. Leaders and staff are skilled at signposting families to appropriate help. They work closely with external agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable families are given timely and effective support.

Leaders have a good understanding of the issues facing the community. They work constantly and effectively to ensure that children are safe from issues such as gang related crime, female genital mutilation and radicalisation. The headteacher works with other schools and the local authority to develop resources for others so that they become more confident in dealing with these issues. Leaders are described by the local authority as having a 'relentless pursuit of the safety of children'. All staff are vigilant, confront issues and have the knowledge and skills to act when they have any concern about a child.

Children learn to manage risk in a safe environment from the start. Simple policies, such as not lifting a child onto equipment, ensure that children quickly develop an understanding of their own limitations. Children develop confidence to have a go.

Inspection findings

- I wanted to find out how effective you have been at improving outcomes for all children. A strong culture of observe, review and plan is in place. The vast majority of children start nursery with skills and knowledge that are lower than those typically expected for their age. Children get off to a flying start because staff assess their individual needs accurately. This enables staff to tailor the environment and the activities on offer to meet each child's needs. An excellent balance of simple, as well as highly stimulating, experiences excite and interest the children. This continuous provision enables children to be independent from the start. As a result, children make exceptional progress during their time in the nursery.
- Assessment practices have further developed and strengthened since the last inspection. A range of appropriate evidence is gathered over time to underpin assessments. You have provided training for staff to support them in using the new assessment and tracking tool. This is now used effectively and enables you and senior leaders to analyse data extremely thoroughly. You have a very comprehensive understanding of each individual child's strengths and areas for

development. You work with local schools to carefully moderate the assessments made. Together, this has resulted in raised expectations of what children can do.

- You use the information to take further action to improve outcomes for groups of children. For example, you are acutely aware of the faster progress made by those children who attend the nursery full time compared to those who attend part time. In order to close the gaps, children have the chance to work in small groups on specific topics such as turning the sand play into a winter wonderland. These extended learning opportunities provide further challenge and enable children to develop a wider range of skills. These activities are highly engaging and interest the children. They concentrate hard and demonstrate great resilience as they keep on trying to find solutions. Adults are skilled in asking questions and posing problems for children to work on. As a result, more children now reach and exceed the expectations typical for their age.
- I also wanted to explore how well you meet the needs of the very youngest children. Since the two-year-olds moved to the main site, all staff have developed a secure understanding of how best to meet their needs. Staff are especially aware of their different emotional and physical needs. Space and time is given to them as a group so that they are not overwhelmed by the older children. They enjoy well-planned activities and high-quality resources and equipment. They quickly learn the routines and access resources independently. At lunchtime children feed themselves and scrape their own plate when they tidy away. Adults give appropriate support. They provide a commentary on the learning taking place and model the vocabulary for children to copy and practise. Children quickly begin to develop secure language and communication skills. They are soon able to make their needs and feelings known.
- Every opportunity is taken to develop speaking and listening skills. Adults are highly skilled in getting children to think, reason and explain. Additional training for staff in boosting early talk is having a positive impact. When questioning children, adults give them time to think before responding. Adults introduce challenging vocabulary linked to the activity. Through practical first-hand exploration, they help children to fully understand the meaning. Opportunities are provided to help children reflect on what they have been learning to do. For example, children looking at photographs taken during the session talk about objects being heavy or light, empty or full. Adults develop children's language in every situation and not just in small groups or with focus children. Language-rich provision is evident across the nursery.
- Transition arrangements are highly effective. Parents comment on how well their children are prepared for nursery and then for their move to school. A carefully planned approach, including home visits and stay and play sessions, ensure that all children settle quickly. Parents are key partners in this approach. They work alongside staff and children on the first morning that their child attends. Strong home-school partnerships are forged in this way. During the inspection some children were starting nursery for the first time. Key workers comforted those who were initially upset before interesting them in an activity. Within a short time, children were playing and beginning to smile.
- Leaders go over and above expectations to ensure that the move to primary

school is successful for every child. Support is provided to parents when applying for places. Leaders accompany vulnerable children and their families on visits to new schools. Comprehensive information is exchanged so that the new school is fully aware of each child's individual needs. Leaders work to ensure a joined-up approach to all stages of early education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a seamless learning journey develops for every child so that outcomes continue to rise and gaps between outcomes for different groups of children are further narrowed.

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

Nicola Harwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you and other leaders about the significant changes to the school since the last inspection, the school's self-evaluation and areas for further development. I shared my key lines of enquiry with you. We discussed information about children's current progress and attainment. I met with members of the governing body, including the chair. I considered the nine responses to the staff questionnaire. I carried out learning walks with senior leaders. During these I spoke with children and discussed what they were doing. I looked at a selection of children's learning journals. I met with parents before school started and considered the one response to Ofsted's Parent View and text service. I met with a representative from the local authority and a peer reviewer for the school. I reviewed a range of documents, including: the school self-evaluation and development plan; minutes of governing body meetings; information on how the early years pupil premium funding is spent; monitoring and training records; and those documents relating to the school's arrangements for keeping children safe.