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Mrs Isabel Davis
Executive Headteacher
Cherry Trees Nursery School
Hawkins Road
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Bedfordshire
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Dear Mrs Davis

Short inspection of Cherry Trees Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous 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 will be a section 5 inspection.

Cherry Trees Nursery School sits at the heart of the community. Staff know the children and their families extremely well, which means that they provide well-targeted support. You and your staff are very reflective. You take time to think about what works well, and quickly adapt your approaches when you review that they are not so effective. All staff are proud to work at the school. They share your vision and commitment to offer high-quality provision.

Children encounter an exciting and relevant range of learning activities. First-hand experiences widen their knowledge and understanding of the world. For example, a visit to a local farm helped children to recognise different animals and their needs. The learning environment is extremely well planned and enables children to develop their independence well. The outdoor space offers many opportunities for children to explore and investigate. Children thrive in this inspiring environment and make excellent progress during their time in the school. Consequently, you are ensuring that children are well prepared for their move to Reception.

Relationships between adults and children are extremely positive. A sense of enjoyment and fun is evident as children learn. They are happy and confident. Children are stimulated by their learning and listen well. They do not give up easily. Alongside this, adults are skilled in knowing when to encourage, support or challenge. Behaviour is excellent, and children take turns and share equipment happily.

Parents are very supportive of the school. They were keen to talk to me during the inspection. They told me how happy their children are and how much progress their children make. Parents are confident that you and your staff help and support their children well. One parent summed up the views of many with the comment: 'I can't fault the school. The teachers are very helpful, and my child is making really good progress.' Parents are interested in their children's achievements. Your improvement plans rightly include continuing to help parents understand how their children learn so that they can support them even more confidently at home.

Since the previous inspection, your school entered into a formal federation with the Peter Pan Nursery School and the Southway Nursery School, known as the Bedford Nursery Schools Federation. You and your knowledgeable leadership team work together effectively to provide strong and purposeful leadership across the federation. You also work in partnership with the Peter Pan Teaching School Alliance. This provides further opportunities to strengthen provision. You and your leadership team make a valuable contribution to the professional development of both your staff and the staff in other schools. For example, you have hosted good-practice visits and completed outreach work across different local authorities. This joint work with the partnership means that your staff are able to see and share the best practice. This contributes well to improvement planning.

Governors are committed to the nursery and share your passion and vision for excellence. They visit the school regularly and provide effective support and challenge. Governors ask probing questions on the progress that children make and clearly understand what evidence you and your leaders use to make your judgements. Governors know that the school's website does not meet statutory requirements. They are addressing this to make sure that it is fully compliant and gives a more accurate picture of the successful work of the school.

At the time of your previous inspection, the report recognised the many strengths of the school. You and your leaders have successfully built on these strengths. You have also effectively addressed the areas identified for improvement, notably planning appropriate activities that challenge children sufficiently, and using questioning well to enable children to think deeply and achieve more.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your governors and staff ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Rigorous checks are carried out on all adults who work in the school.

Staff receive regular and helpful training to ensure that they know their safeguarding duties. Consequently, procedures for reporting concerns about a child's welfare are clearly understood and followed. You have developed valuable partnerships with social care, healthcare and educational professionals. This ensures that children and families get the right support when they need it. You are tenacious in following up any concerns or issues.

Your family support worker has developed close links with families. Parents commented on how supportive staff are and how well they promote children's health, safety and well-being.

Staff complete detailed risk assessments and the school site is well maintained. You and your team meet daily to discuss the welfare of all children, with a focus on children who may be vulnerable or not achieving as well as they could. You and your leaders check continuously that the extra help that these children receive makes a positive difference to both their well-being and their achievement.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the lines of enquiry for me to explore. Firstly, I considered how leaders are ensuring that the needs of children are assessed and met effectively so that children achieve well in all areas of learning.
- Since the previous inspection, you and your staff have given a lot of thought to the best ways to teach the children in your care. Your shared focus on 'What is the child doing?', 'What is the adult teaching?' and 'What is the outcome?' has helped staff to consider carefully how best to support children and make sure they progress well. Your chosen approach to planning very effectively supports children to make choices about their learning that build on their interests. Your staff select resources carefully to help children to develop their speaking and listening skills as they work together. Thoughtful commentaries, suggestions and questions from staff inspire children to think and choose their next steps.
- Your staff work effectively to support children who speak English as an additional language, providing a range of books that reflect the diversity of children's experiences. Adults provide many opportunities for children to extend their spoken language. Signs and pictures are used consistently well to support children's understanding and develop their vocabulary. Staff are very skilful in modelling and repeating words and sentences to extend children's learning. They also use questions successfully to make children think for themselves. For example, when some children noticed that they had stopped water from flowing through a plastic tube, the adult working with them asked, 'What did you change to make that happen?' This made the children think and try out different ways until they understood that the water flow had stopped because they had raised the end of the tube.
- The needs of disadvantaged children and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are quickly identified and appropriate support put in place. Additional funding is used to provide extra opportunities and experiences. For example, children attend breakfast and tea clubs to help

develop their social and communication skills. Your staff clearly understand the barriers that may prevent these children from learning. This enables them to provide personalised interventions to meet each child's needs.

- Most-able children are given tasks that challenge their thinking and move them on quickly with their learning. Staff are skilled in supporting the most able children to use their phonics knowledge to experiment with early writing.
- As a result of this high-quality provision, children at Cherry Trees Nursery School enjoy their learning and achieve very well. The school's assessment information and the children's learning journals show that they make excellent progress from their various starting points.
- Another line of enquiry focused on how leaders have developed the curriculum to meet the needs of the youngest children. Since the previous inspection, the nursery has extended its age range to admit two-year-olds, so I wanted to check the quality of provision for these children.
- Staff plan carefully and teach a wide range of engaging learning experiences that meet the specific needs of the two-year-olds. Learning areas are well laid out and spacious. This allows children to access different activities, move around freely and rest when they need to. Staff give children excellent opportunities to take turns, to share and to be inquisitive about the world around them. Children's physical skills are developed through many lively and creative activities. Opportunities for speaking and listening are at the centre of children's learning.
- There is a strong emphasis on providing children with high-quality resources and real-life experiences. During the inspection, I observed early language and number skills being promoted very well as children were smelling, feeling, describing and counting various vegetables to make some soup. I also saw children looking at books with adults and happily singing action rhymes together.
- Exciting activities cover all areas of learning and totally capture and sustain children's interest. For example, one group of two-year-olds were completely enthralled as they watched an adult squirt shaving foam through a tower of plastic pots. This very engaging activity led to children accurately using the terms 'big' and 'bigger' to describe the size of the pots, and 'soft' and 'smelly' to describe the foam. Such a well-planned and stimulating environment ensures that the youngest children thoroughly enjoy their time at the nursery and make the same substantial progress as their older peers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to enhance their engagement with parents to help them better understand how to support their children's learning at home
- the nursery's website is up to date, meets statutory requirements and gives a full picture of all aspects of the 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 Bedford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Webb
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I undertook joint visits to learning sessions inside and outdoors with you and your interim deputy headteacher. I looked at the work children were doing and spoke to them about their learning in both the morning and afternoon sessions. I met with you and your leadership team to discuss progress since the previous inspection. We also discussed outcomes for children and the impact of decisions that leaders have made on children's learning. I met with one of your assistant headteachers, who is also the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), to discuss how children who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported so that they achieve well.

I spoke to the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I met with one adviser from the local authority, and held a phone conversation with another, to discuss their work with the school.

I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including: the school's improvement plans; leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness; your records of monitoring and evaluation; and the school's assessment information for all children. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures and the records of checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children. A discussion was held with you, your interim deputy headteacher and family support worker, as the school's designated safeguarding officers.

I spoke with parents during the inspection to gain their views of the school. I took into account the eight free-text responses from parents made through Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, I considered the school's own written feedback from parents. I also analysed the 20 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.