

25 March 2019

Mrs Lindsey Fuller
Headteacher
Speedwell Nursery School
Speedwell Road
Kingswood
Bristol
BS5 7SY

Dear Mrs Lindsey Fuller

Short inspection of Speedwell Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 2019, 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 May 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the 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 school's current overall effectiveness grade of outstanding as a result of this inspection.**

Since the previous inspection, there have been considerable changes to the school's governance and to staff responsibilities. The school has federated with Little Hayes Nursery School and you now have responsibility for the headship of both schools. The federation has also resulted in the reorganisation of the governing body.

Throughout the changes, you and your governors have kept the needs of the children at the heart of your decisions. The school remains a happy and nurturing place where children are kept safe and enjoy warm relationships with adults. You are rightly proud of your work to involve parents in their children's learning, which also remains a strength of the provision. Outcomes remain positive, with most children catching up to the standards expected for their age from starting points that are lower than typically seen. However, you recognise that more needs to be done to make sure that pupils make consistently strong progress in all classes.

You have identified areas for improvement in both teaching and the quality of leadership. Together with governors, you have developed new leadership roles to increase the capacity of the leadership team. Both the assistant head and the senior teacher are new to their roles. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and have begun to support other adults to plan more challenging learning across the curriculum. However, changes that leaders are making are in their very

early stages. Leaders have not yet made all of the checks and improvements that they have planned and it is too soon to determine their impact on children's outcomes.

Governors know the school's provision well because they make regular visits and work closely with leaders. New governors bring increased skills and experience, for example the school has recently gained a knowledgeable safeguarding governor as a result of the federation. Governors provide challenge to school leaders to improve further and they know that some groups of pupils could make better progress, especially the more able children and boys. However, their improvement plans do not clarify the expectations of what leaders will check and when, or the improvements to children's outcomes that governors expect. This limits governors' capacity to check that leaders are improving teaching well enough.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school staff and appreciate the approachable and inclusive atmosphere that you and your team provide. Those I spoke to and those who completed the Ofsted online survey Parent View and the free-text response were effusive about the help that the school provides for families. They speak highly of how the school supports their children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One comment that school staff, 'do everything they can and look after everyone as an individual', was typical of many parents' views.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the transition of children to Reception classes. Teachers meet frequently with Reception teachers to compare their assessments of children's learning. In addition, Reception class teachers visit the school to receive detailed information about the children before they transfer to primary school. This has helped practitioners to plan better to prepare children for the next stage. You told me how the links have helped to raise your expectations of what children can achieve in preparation for their Reception classes, for example by improving children's knowledge of numbers. You are also helping to make sure that those children in supported by the additional premium funding make strong progress after they leave Nursery school. You provide detailed records and work with other leaders to check the progress of these pupils thoroughly over time.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is of the utmost importance to leaders and governors. The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and well maintained. Staff and governors keep their training up to date and consequently they know their responsibilities well. There is a culture of vigilance, where staff are aware of the risks to children and the diverse needs of families. Governors check that staff receive up-to-date training and that leaders respond to concerns quickly and appropriately.

Leaders understand the importance of early intervention to keep children safe and they work effectively as a team to identify additional help for families. Leaders are also tenacious in following up concerns with external agencies if they are not

satisfied that children are receiving the support they need. Leaders check that the school's environment is safe and that vulnerable children receive the care that they need. Statutory welfare requirements are met.

Inspection findings

- To check whether the school remained outstanding, I investigated the progress made by boys and whether they make as much progress as girls. In 2018, boys did not achieve as well as girls in some areas, including in writing and mathematical development.
- A greater proportion of boys now have higher starting points by the end of their first year at Nursery as a result of the strong progress that they have made. My observation of this group of boys' learning and evidence of their work showed that too few of them are making good progress to achieve well in preparation for the Reception class.
- Records of boys' learning show their growing knowledge of the world around them, an interest in reading and a strong understanding of numbers. However, adults do not use their assessments well enough to build on boys' interests and knowledge. As a result, some boys lose interest in their tasks or select activities which, while engaging, do not provide them with enough challenge. The activities which adults plan do not develop boys' early writing well enough, especially those boys who can make marks and hold writing instruments correctly.
- I also considered how well the school supports children who enter school at the early stages of speaking English. These children receive additional support to help them identify sounds, to copy songs and stories and to read simple words. Records of group work show that in these well-tailored sessions, children make good progress because adults provide tasks which match their needs and question them skilfully. I also observed some activities which helped children to extend their speech through play. For example, a group developed their understanding of words like 'up, down, around' while making marks to create a simple map outside.
- However, my observations of children's learning, along with scrutiny of their records, showed that these children do not make consistently strong progress. Adults do not consistently question or support children new to speaking English well enough to help them to speak confidently as they play and explore. As a result, some children do not progress well enough to speak in simple sentences or to build their vocabulary well enough over time.
- Finally, I considered how well leaders' actions and their evaluation of the school has helped them to maintain outstanding provision. Leaders carefully check the progress that all groups of pupils make. The leadership of special educational needs provides strong support to adults to help them to meet the needs of children with SEND. Adults set precise targets for this group of children, which the leaders check carefully. In addition, leaders engage additional professionals to provide advice on how to meet some children's complex needs. Consequently, children with SEND make strong progress.
- Leaders who are newer to their roles have correctly identified areas for the

school to improve and have developed research questions linked to their plans to help adults to reflect on their practice. This includes how well adults plan to challenge the most able boys. Leaders have also raised their expectations of what children can achieve in key areas of the curriculum and have identified these required outcomes clearly. As a result, adults are beginning to plan activities more carefully and are raising their expectations of what children can achieve. This has been effective in helping more children to gain a good knowledge of numbers and to count accurately.

- These improvements are still in an early stage of development and leaders recognise that some of their work is not yet fully embedded. In addition, leaders' plans do not help them to link their checks on teaching to how well they expect children to make gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills. As a result, many children are not currently making the progress that they should, especially in writing and speaking.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further develop the roles of new leaders and make sure that leaders link precisely their checks on teaching to improved outcomes for children
- adults use assessments of children's learning more effectively to provide greater challenge, particularly when developing children's vocabulary and their speaking skills
- all children, especially boys, make strong progress in developing their early writing skills and children new to speaking English make more rapid gains in their speaking skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Mirams
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I held meetings with you and with school leaders. I spoke to a school leader on the telephone. We reviewed your plans for improvement, information on current children's progress and your own evaluation of the school's performance. We observed children's learning together. I also met with members of the governing body and spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.

I scrutinised various safeguarding records, including risk assessments and the checks on adults working in the school. I reviewed a number of records of children's learning.

I also considered three parent responses to the online survey, Parent View, and two free-text responses. There were no responses to the staff survey.