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7 January 2016

Mrs Cathy Draper
Executive Headteacher
Lane Head Nursery School
High Road
Willenhall
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WV12 4JQ

Dear Mrs Draper

Short inspection of Lane Head Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 8 December 2015, 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 February 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

You and your leadership team are relentless in your drive for continuous improvement. The school is federated with Rosedale C of E Infant and Short Heath Junior schools. The three schools are collectively named 'The Short Heath Federation'. The leaders of the federation and the in-school leaders and managers are never complacent and accept no excuses. As a result, you have maintained, and further improved, the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You took swift and thorough action to tackle the single area for improvement identified in the previous inspection. As a result, the curriculum has been completely redesigned and now builds children's awareness of other cultures and ways of life systematically through activities that are based around a series of well-selected quality stories.

The highly tailored provision children receive means they settle in quickly and learn exceptionally well. By the time they leave the school, many have acquired skills beyond those typical for their age. This is impressive, given that many start from a very low baseline. The most-able children are making better progress now than at the time of the previous inspection. The nurturing care and additional help given to disadvantaged children is helping them to catch up as quickly as others in the school. The inclusion manager acts swiftly to respond to early signs that children

may have special educational needs. The effective support she brokers for these children means that, once their needs are fully catered for, they too begin to catch up quickly.

You, the head of school and the senior teacher ensure that children encounter an exciting and relevant range of activities, experiences and resources. Classrooms and outdoor areas are extremely inviting. Adults ensure children investigate and explore freely, testing out their growing skills in safe, yet challenging situations. Children love coming to the Nursery and are excited by these early experiences of school life.

It would help pupils to reinforce their skills if adults spoke to them in full sentences at all times and thus supported them in communicating.

Safeguarding is effective.

Children's safety and well-being are central to the school's work. Vigilant checks are made on all adults who come into contact with children. Staff, volunteers and visitors are briefed thoroughly in how to ensure children are safe. Any slight concern is quickly and appropriately reported, investigated and kept under review. Full use is made of available agencies to ensure correct actions are followed through.

Leaders have established clear rules regarding the use of mobile phones and cameras. Staff and parents fully understand and adhere to the restrictions. Leaders, including governors, are vigilant to indications of potential radicalisation and extremism.

Helping children to learn to manage risk is a fundamental feature of the school's approach to teaching. Children are given freedom to explore and investigate, yet guided to make safe choices while playing. All activities are thoroughly assessed for potential risk.

Governors routinely test out the rigour of safeguarding procedures to assure themselves that the school's robust policies around keeping children safe are implemented consistently.

Inspection findings

- Leaders at all levels, including governors, share an accurate understanding of why the school is outstanding and what can improve even further. This is because all aspects of the school's work are closely monitored. Anything falling below your uncompromisingly high expectations is swiftly acted upon. For example, leaders identified that children's daily experiences in mathematics were not consistently of the same high quality as those in literacy. Subsequent actions were sharply focused on improving children's learning. Leaders' observations show that children now choose to spend more of their time playing with

mathematical resources as a result and that adults make more use of opportunities to reinforce mathematical language and ideas, such as by counting down to the end of an activity, using sand timers to help children take turns and by talking about things being 'bigger' or 'smaller'.

- Governors are highly active and integral to the school's success. The three schools in the federation are governed by a single governing body. Each school in the federation has a nominated link governor. Link-governor visits are a core element of the robust monitoring and self-evaluation that characterises leadership of the federation. These visits are rigorously challenging events in which governors test out for themselves the effectiveness of the school's work. Outcomes from these visits are effectively disseminated to the whole governing body.
- Following the previous inspection, senior leaders seized the opportunity to create a new curriculum. The new approach focuses on the traditions and cultures in the community as a whole through the keystone of 'Treasured Texts', which are well-known books that children read in school and share at home. These stories are expertly selected to help to teach specific skills (such as what the number '3' means) and to provide opportunities for children to experience different cultures and ways of life. For example, a book called "*Wow!*" *said the owl* is used to focus children on the wonders of light. This experience is skilfully used to give children an insight into the practices and customs linked to the Hindu festival of light, Diwali.
- The head of school and her staff have built strong, trusting relationships between home and school. Staff visit children in their homes to get to know them before they start the Nursery. Staff and parents speak daily as children are dropped off or collected. The family support adviser is always on hand to answer parents' questions or listen to any concerns. Leaders are highly supportive when families experience difficulties and work sensitively with parents, where necessary, to ensure children can attend the Nursery regularly. Parents told me they appreciate being allowed to stay with their child to assist the smooth transition into Nursery. All those spoken to were full of praise for the Nursery. As one said, 'It's just brilliant!'
- When many of the children start at the Nursery, they struggle to communicate as well as most three-year-olds. Much time and many resources are given in school to help children to learn to listen, to understand and to speak clearly. For example, adults use a form of sign language which helps children to make better sense of what is being said to them. External professional expertise is brokered effectively to support children with specific speech and language problems. Leaders set clear expectations that all adults will model high-quality English, using complete sentences, when talking with children and that they will help children to respond in a similar way. Many examples of this were observed during my visit. As a result, most children were trying to speak correctly to adults. On a few occasions, some adults did not speak using a complete sentence. While these occurrences were rare, they did result in missed opportunities to reinforce children's skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all adults use full sentences and quality English at all times when speaking with children
- all adults take every opportunity to support children to communicate effectively.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sandy Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the head of school, other senior staff, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and parents. I observed children as they learned and played in classrooms and outdoors. I reviewed the school's checks for safeguarding children, records of children's attendance and progress, the views of 26 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and 12 staff who completed the inspection questionnaire.