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Mrs Helen Fearn
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fearn

Short inspection of Central Community Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 2016, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your arrival a year ago, you have ensured that Central Community Nursery School has continued to improve.

The approach of you and your staff is reflected in the school's vision of 'Making every step count'. This vision sets out the importance of ensuring that each child achieves success. It also makes clear how your staff will work as a close team, and that all children will be treated equally, valued and inspired to learn. In addition, you strive to offer a safe and personalised learning environment that supports both children and their families.

This vision shapes and guides the way you and your staff work. You, and they, have high expectations for what each child will achieve. Equality of opportunity is promoted well at all levels. For instance, those children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are given high-quality support to make good progress through activities that allow them to be fully included alongside other children.

You ensure that parents are partners in the education of their children. Your staff use the information parents provide about their child's needs, abilities and skills, before starting at the nursery. Parents then meet regularly with staff to discuss their child's progress and development, with many of them sending photographs and information through the year to your staff about what their child is also learning at home. Parents who attend information evenings about areas such as mathematics

also say that they find these very useful. As a result, parents feel they have a close relationship to your school, and they express their strong support. As one parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, stated, 'I moved my daughter to this nursery at the beginning of the year and it was the best decision I made. She has come on in leaps and bounds since joining. All the staff are lovely and brilliant at their jobs. I have no concerns whatsoever. I would thoroughly recommend the nursery.'

You and the governing body have a clear idea of the things the school does well, along with what aspects need further improvement. These are set out in a detailed school improvement plan. However, you agree that this is not yet highly effective, because the dates for starting the actions you have planned are not always precise enough. In addition, the ways that these actions will be checked are not sufficiently clear.

At the last inspection, inspectors commended leaders for the way in which, for example, a good training programme was helping staff to improve their skills, and how teachers' classroom performance was monitored closely to ensure that it became better still over time. These, and all other good aspects seen at the time of the inspection, have continued. You have also attended well to the areas which inspectors asked you to improve. You now ensure that you and your staff work closely with teachers in other settings to check that the assessments you are making of children's progress are accurate. Your staff have also improved the quality of questioning that they use with children. During my visit, I saw a number of occasions when adults were asking children good questions to make them think hard, as well as to test their understanding. For example, one child was asked why a carrot had become black on one edge. She explained proudly and correctly that it was because it had become 'a bit burned in the oven', and had 'now cooled down'. Because of questioning by adults that is more challenging, children receive better opportunities to explain, to use a wider range of vocabulary and to think more deeply. At the last inspection, inspectors also asked staff, when planning their lessons, to use more effectively the information they had gathered about what children could do already. During my visit, teachers were kind enough to allow me to examine a range of their current planning. This shows clearly that staff now take full account of children's skills and, as a result, plan lessons and activities that challenge them effectively. As a result, children's progress does not slow.

Your school has recently begun to admit children who are two years old. During my visit, I saw that, as a result of the caring nature of staff, these children had already settled in and were getting off to a good start. Adults were planning learning activities well. They were also organising regular structure to the daily timetable so that, for example, children understand that, after eating their snack, they go outside to play and explore. Staff model good manners to children, expecting them to say 'thank you' and 'please' where appropriate. They also promote children's independence during activities such as washing their hands and visiting the toilet.

The indoor environment for all children is calm, attractive and well kept. The areas for older children have equipment and activities that are more challenging than those for children who are two years old, so that these children can extend their

skills. The outdoor spaces are exceptionally attractive and children are given excellent opportunities to learn in the fresh air and to experience the wonder of nature. For example, older children are given responsibilities to care for your nursery's two chickens, collecting their eggs each day. Your staff also show children how to grow seeds, water plants as they grow and then harvest the vegetables and fruit for their own use. For example, I saw children working together to cut up the green beans and other vegetables they had grown in the garden to make a vegetable soup.

As a result of good teaching, children make good progress from their starting points. Nine in ten children make at least the progress expected of them in almost all areas of learning, with most making more than this. Around three quarters of children leave the school with overall levels of attainment in line with the expectations for their age. However, you are aware that children's progress is not yet consistently strong in all areas of learning. For example, children currently make less progress in areas such as number. In this area, over five terms, only around half of the children made more than the progress expected of them. This is considerably less than in other areas, such as listening and attention. As a result, fewer children attain well in number compared with other areas.

Disadvantaged children make good overall progress from their starting points. You focus your spending of the early years pupil premium to give support in areas such as developing children's understanding, listening and attention, where these children need to catch up most. However, although the progress of disadvantaged children is strong overall, you agree that, last year, their skills in understanding of communication and language did not improve as much as they should have done. As a result, you have made this a priority for action and you are adjusting your provision for these children this year.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your assistant headteacher ensure that children are kept safe. You see that all staff are effectively and regularly trained in safeguarding, including areas of recent national concern, such as extremism. During my visit, I met with staff, who could describe the different indicators that suggest a child might be being harmed. They were very clear of their responsibilities to report any concerns they might have, and know the school's system to do this.

You make prompt referrals to external agencies for any child whose circumstances require it, and work closely with those agencies to ensure that the risk of harm to children is minimised. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The records you keep are detailed and are of high quality.

Staff also work to ensure that children learn about a range of risks to their safety, such as understanding the need to walk safely on pavements when they are outside the school.

Inspection findings

- Since your arrival, you have wasted no time in gaining an accurate view of what the school does well, and have ensured that these strengths have been sustained. You are also clear about where provision needs to be adjusted so that children make even faster progress than they do.
- You provide the governing body with a good overall level of information about all aspects of the school so that governors can challenge you and your assistant headteacher effectively. Records of governors' meetings and visits I saw showed that they hold you to account effectively for all aspects of the school.
- Governors have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Your school has very recently federated with Ashgate Nursery School and there is now one governing body, with yourself as executive headteacher for the two schools. You and the governors have managed the federation process with great care. The new governing body has wasted no time in already establishing the committee structure, along with who will be responsible for checking important areas in both schools, such as the safeguarding of children.
- The governing body cannot check very effectively that actions to improve things are having the effect it intended, because the timescales and the measures of intended success within the school development plan are not always clear enough.
- You have strong support from your staff. Those who responded to your most recent questionnaire expressed very positive views of all areas. All of them stated that, for example, they felt part of a united team, and that they understood what the school was trying to achieve. As one explained, 'I am extremely proud to be a member at Central. Everything is getting better!'
- Good leadership is improving the quality of teaching. You monitor the quality of teaching regularly by looking at teachers' planning and by visiting lessons. You give teachers good advice on how to make their lessons even more effective.
- You promote the good attendance of children effectively. As a result, most children come to the nursery very regularly. You work closely with the small number of parents whose children do not attend as often as they could, so that the attendance of these children increases.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. It contains useful information for parents on how they can help their children with their reading, writing and mathematics, as well as many attractive photographs of the exciting things the children do at your school, such as pond dipping and making models together.
- Staff ensure that children keep themselves safe while undertaking all activities. For example, children were told to use the fishing nets with care so that no one was injured, and to be careful of logs when stepping over them in the 'forest area'.
- You ensure that children who attend the breakfast club are safe and well looked after.
- The majority of children enter with levels of skills typically below those found in children of the same age, and make good progress over time.
- Although the skills and understanding of children improve well overall, they do not learn as fast in some areas, such as number, as in others.

- Children at your school develop good early reading skills, and learn to enjoy books. During my visit, staff and children of different abilities read 'The hungry caterpillar' together. Children were able to describe what was happening in the story, along with turning the pages to see what would happen next. They used knitted puppets to explain all the food the caterpillar was eating.
- The most able children make good progress because your staff give them challenging work to help them build, for example, their early reading and writing skills.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good overall progress from their starting points. This is because the staff both precisely identify, and continually review, the needs of these children, giving them good support so that they build their skills and reach their potential.
- Last year, disadvantaged children made good gains in their skills, but less so in areas such as their understanding.
- Due to the small numbers of the most able disadvantaged children, it is not possible to report on their outcomes without the risk of identifying them. However, you spend the early years pupil premium for these children to ensure that they have effective additional opportunities to develop their skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the school development plan includes precise timescales for all actions, along with clear ways to check that those actions have produced the improvements intended
- children's progress accelerates, so that a greater proportion reach the standards expected for their age in number
- disadvantaged children make faster progress in those areas, such as their understanding of communication and language, where they do not learn so quickly.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

My inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. These were:

- whether the areas for improvement, identified at the last inspection, had been addressed effectively
- whether the quality of teaching was high for all children, including those children who are two years old and children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- examining the rate of progress of children across the different areas of learning in the early years foundation stage
- whether disadvantaged children are making strong progress from their starting points
- investigating the quality of leadership and management in the school, including the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures.

During the inspection, I met with you, your assistant headteacher, other members of the teaching staff, and representatives of the governing body. Together, you and I visited all areas in the school to observe teaching and learning for all children. I observed children's behaviour in lessons. I considered the views of 17 parents posted on Parent View, alongside the school's most recent questionnaire. I read a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, your school development plan and information on outcomes for children. I visited the breakfast club, which is maintained by the governing body, to check that children were safe. I studied information related to attendance, anonymised examples of teachers' appraisals and examined safeguarding records and policies. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.