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Ms Sally Davies
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Davies

Short inspection of Bloomsbury Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 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 outstanding in June 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since your appointment as headteacher, you have continued to build on the school's strengths. Numbers on roll have increased significantly because of the school's excellent reputation. You have a clear vision and strong determination to ensure that children receive the very best level of care and education. You are extremely well supported by a highly knowledgeable and effective deputy headteacher. Together, you lead by example and set high expectations for all staff. Teamwork is a strength of the school and staff work cooperatively together. All adults work hard to provide children with stimulating, varied and fun activities. As a result, children are happy, keen to learn, and achieve very well.

A strong philosophy of child-centred learning, through play, exploration and discovery, underpins the school's success. Adults are highly attentive to children's individual needs. They have excellent relationships with children. Provision is tailored carefully for the needs of different age groups and children's different abilities. You have created three discrete classrooms: 'Bluebells' for children who have complex significant needs and/or disabilities, 'Daisies' for two-year-olds and 'Sunflowers' for three- to four-year-olds. Teaching is consistently effective and children make rapid gains in their learning and thrive emotionally, physically and academically.

You have successfully addressed the area for improvement set at the last inspection. Staff assess children's skills carefully on entry and throughout the year. They draw on their knowledge of children's abilities to plan the next steps of learning and help to accelerate progress. You are not complacent, however, and still strive for further improvement. Creative development is exceptionally well promoted, together with the prime areas of learning: physical, personal, social and emotional and communication and language. However, while literacy skills are incorporated very well into daily activities, older children do not consistently receive the same exposure to mathematical activities as younger children. The teaching of mathematical skills in the Sunflowers classroom does not always provide sufficient challenge. This limits the progress that older children make in this subject.

Safeguarding is effective.

The mantra of 'safeguarding is everyone's responsibility' underpins the robust safeguarding culture evident within the school. Together with the deputy headteacher, you ensure that procedures and processes are effective and fit for purpose. Safeguarding checks are diligently carried out for staff prior to appointment. Regular training is undertaken by governors and all staff so that everyone is fully conversant with current legislation and safeguarding procedures. As a result, adults know precisely what to do if they are worried about a child. Record-keeping is meticulous and very well organised. Referrals are made to the appropriate authority when necessary so that support is put in place or actions are taken to ensure that children are safe.

Activities, such as visits to the farm, local shops or the seaside, are thoroughly assessed for potential risks and adults supervise children carefully at all times. Safety procedures are checked during health and safety audits. Regular fire drills are carried out so that staff and children know how to evacuate the building quickly and safely.

As a UNICEF Rights Respecting School, children are taught about conflict resolution strategies and the importance of respecting and valuing others from different religious and cultural backgrounds. This is a strength within the school, with British values inherent in the school's ethos. This sets the tone for a calm and positive learning environment where children feel safe.

Inspection findings

- Most children attend the nursery part time but there are some who attend full time. As headteacher, you have ensured that flexible arrangements are in place to accommodate all parental preferences regarding their child's attendance. This demonstrates your flexibility and strong commitment to working in partnership with parents and carers. As a result, numbers have increased significantly at Bloomsbury. Most children join the nursery with skills and knowledge below those typically expected. However, children make rapid progress due to the excellent teaching, support and nurture they receive. As a result, the large majority leave the school working in line with, or above, age-related expectations and well

prepared for their next school.

- Children are assessed accurately on entry using the two-year-old check, language screening tests and teacher observations. Teachers use this information well to plan imaginative and exciting activities which build on their levels of ability. Communication and language is generally a weaker area for most children on entry, but excellent modelling by adults, together with skilled questioning, enables children to make good gains in this area of learning. Learning journeys provide helpful evidence to depict what stage children are working at. These are regularly shared with parents, who add their own comments about their child's development.
- Over half of the children are eligible for pupil premium funding. You use additional funding received for these children exceptionally well. Tailored support and intervention are provided both in the main classrooms and in the Bluebell classroom. Enrichment is also a key priority in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils are fully included in all the activities that the school has to offer. Funding is used to support trips to the seaside, work with an artist in residence, participation in yoga and provision of a healthy breakfast each day for all children. As a result, these children make excellent progress. There is no difference in the achievement of disadvantaged children compared to their peers.
- There are an increasing number of children joining school with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The excellent leadership of the deputy headteacher ensures that these children make rapid progress from their starting points. External agency support is accessed and utilised to a high level to aid children's development. Makaton signing is used universally across the school by all staff. This enables adults and children to communicate effectively and reduce any language barriers. Visual prompt cards are also an effective aid for children with communication difficulties, for example touching a picture card to show what they would like to do or eat. The fine detail of the learning environment in Bluebells has also been fully considered. Distractions are kept to a minimum and the decor of the room is such that it does not overstimulate children identified with autism. Parents are invited to work alongside their child on a weekly stay and play session. This arrangement was observed during the inspection and demonstrated the strength of the parent-school partnership; parents observed how staff managed their child and vice versa.
- You have worked extremely hard to build a positive working relationship with parents and this has been highly successful. Parents have very positive views and are extremely pleased with the school. A typical comment from a parent was, 'My child wants to come to nursery seven days a week.' Effective induction arrangements are in place which provide parents and children with opportunities to get know the school. You share your philosophy of partnership working from the outset so that parents feel comfortable coming in to school. 'Welcome Group Time', at the start of each day, allows parents to stay and settle their child. Workshops, parent/carer review meetings and celebration events all strengthen this partnership and enable parents to be fully informed and involved in their child's education. Regular communication through monthly letters, text messages and daily contact with teachers ensures that parents know what is happening.

- Children get off to an excellent start in Daisies and Bluebells. They continue to thrive and develop well in Sunflowers class. Teachers plan exciting activities in all classes. This leads to high levels of engagement and exemplary behaviour by children. Teachers observe each other and attend training to help develop their practice. All adults work well together and take full responsibility for children in their key groups. Children are taught to make choices, act independently and collaborate with other children. The prime areas of learning are very strongly promoted through free-flow activities and there is an effective balance of adult-led and child-led activity. Reading and early mark-making feature prominently on the timetable. However, mathematical skills are not as well promoted as literacy, and activities linked to mathematics sometimes lack challenge for older children. Too few children know popular number rhymes and there are limited opportunities for children to solve problems for themselves.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- an equal focus is given to mathematics alongside other areas of learning in the Sunflower classroom and the teaching of mathematics provides greater levels of challenge for older children.

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

Heather Simpson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, teaching staff and members of the governing body. I discussed the work of the school with you, including the processes and procedures in place for safeguarding. I visited three teaching areas and observed and spoke with children in the morning and afternoon sessions. I also scrutinised copies of children's learning journals and records of teachers' observations.

I looked at a range of school documents, including the school's information about children's achievement. I also reviewed the school's own evaluation of its work, together with the school development plan. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to generate any results on the website. However, I considered the views expressed by parents when they were in the nursery and the school's own parental survey. There were four responses to the staff survey and their views were fully considered.