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Mrs Deirdre Malley
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Dear Mrs Malley

Short inspection of Lord Street Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Lord Street Nursery is a happy school where children get off to a good start and discover the fun of learning. Children of different ages settle in very quickly because staff are very friendly, welcoming and positive. Children quickly notice that staff set out many interesting activities for them. Staff are also genuinely interested to see what children can do and say. For example, the day prior to the inspection, a child was excited to find a spider in the outdoor area. Staff kindled his interest by helping him to research spiders using a tablet computer and to make a book. On the day of my visit, children were busy with staff on a spider hunt. Later, they extended their skills by learning how to make spiders and webs using felt, pipe cleaners, string and scissors. Staff are keen to teach children to be independent by, for example, showing them how to fasten their coats. They help children learn to persist in tasks that are tricky, rather than give up easily.

The curriculum is fun, and the learning environment is engaging. Outdoors, children can hide behind bushes as they make up stories together. They can sit in the reading shed, where an early enjoyment of books is fostered. Children also have opportunities to learn in a forest. There, staff teach them how to observe and judge, for example, whether sticks are longer or shorter than others. Children learn when sticks are dry enough to put on the fire they make. Photographs proudly displayed on the school corridors show children's excitement from learning about

the wonder of nature. Effective modelling from staff means that children have positive attitudes to learning. This helps to ensure that they are well prepared for the Reception Year. Children are well behaved and learn to cooperate, share and listen to others.

The school's governing body is led by a chair who has an extensive knowledge of early years education. She and her colleagues ask challenging questions and hold you to account for the progress children make. You and other senior leaders have attended well to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Staff ensure that they waste no time in giving all children good and varied opportunities to boost their skills in speaking. Staff ask children plenty of questions, offer them appropriate choices and introduce them to new words. Lunchtimes are valuable opportunities for staff to show children how to say 'please' and 'thank you' appropriately. Adults also encourage children to explain what foods they like. Staff use simple gestures and facial expressions effectively to help the many children who are at the early stages of learning English. They tell parents and carers of these children to continue using their child's home language outside school. This helps children become confident in learning how sentences are structured.

Since becoming headteacher in January 2017, you have ensured that the many strengths of the school have been maintained. You have also helped to improve the skills of staff by giving them useful training and by organising learning so that two-year-old children are taught alongside their older peers. This has helped staff to have a better understanding of the needs of children of different ages. Staff work closely together and support each other to improve further. All of the large proportion that responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire expressed positive views of your leadership. They noted that they feel respected, have a clear idea of the school's aims and are very proud to undertake their roles. You have also introduced a new system for assessing and tracking children's progress. Staff are becoming increasingly familiar with this process. You have identified that the next step is for staff to meet with staff in other early years settings to discuss the accuracy of their judgements.

All the parents I met, along with all those who responded to both Ofsted's and the school's questionnaires, gave highly positive views of the school. They explained to me how their children love coming to learn each day. They noted how staff and leaders are consistently helpful, approachable and supportive. One parent summed up the view of others by explaining, 'The start that children get is just fantastic. I recommend this Nursery to everyone!' Staff give parents frequent updates about the new things their children have learned. They do not make parents aware, however, of where their child's attainment sits alongside that of others of the same age nationally. This means that parents are not sufficiently informed about what their child should be able to do, and how quickly they make progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other senior leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff receive thorough training and so are vigilant for any sign that a child could be being harmed, exploited or abused. They are clear that they must report any concern to you. Records I examined during my visit consistently show that they do so. Daily briefings provide regular opportunities for staff to share quickly any unusual behaviour they have noted in a child. You and other senior leaders keep excellent records in precise detail that show the well-judged actions you take. You do not delay in making referrals to a wide range of agencies whenever this is needed.

You and the staff ensure that children feel very safe in the Nursery. Staff consider risks well and they teach children to notice these and to act to reduce them. For example, staff show children how to mop up water so that their friends will not slip. They also teach children how their behaviour can affect others and that, if they upset or hurt someone, they should try to help them feel happy again quickly. This means that children become kind and considerate of others as they become older.

Inspection findings

- A very large majority of children enter the school at two years old with skills below or well below those found typically at that age. For example, around eight in 10 children need to catch up with their skills in understanding, and around nine in 10 in speaking. By the time they leave, a majority are working at least at broadly typical levels.
- Staff I met discussed confidently the gains that children make, for example in reading, writing and mathematics. You have already planned to meet with colleagues in other nurseries so you can be confident that staff are consistently judging accurately children's skills in all areas of learning.
- Two-year-old children are making good progress from their starting points. They are keen to see what older children are doing. This encourages them to 'have a go', too. Staff ensure that equipment and resources are accessible for them, so they do not miss out and become frustrated.
- Children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. This includes children in the school's enhanced resource provision. Staff know the needs of these children well, and the coordinator for their education checks what they do effectively and reviews the gains they make. She ensures that transition arrangements are of a high quality so that children's start at their next school will be smooth and positive.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. You use the early years pupil premium well. As a result, a higher proportion of these children than others leave with skills that are at least in line with those typically found.
- The family support worker and safeguarding coordinator offers exceptional levels of care to vulnerable children and their families. She is skilled at quickly building excellent, trusting and sincere relationships with parents. She helps them, for

example, with strategies to use at home when their child's behaviour is challenging. She refers and signposts parents to health visitors and the community paediatrician. She also tracks the attendance of all children very closely. She works tirelessly with families to reduce the absence of those whose children do not come to school regularly enough.

- Parents believe that the system of communication with staff helps them to let staff know of any issues or worries they have. They receive useful information on the things their child needs to improve. Staff, however, do not give parents a clear explanation of their child's different skills compared with those of others nationally. They also do not update parents well enough about how well their child is catching up, or whether his or her skills are at or above those usually found.
- Parents who responded to Parent View, those I met during my visit and the many who gave their views through the school's own questionnaire, unanimously believe that the school keeps their children safe.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff give parents, when they join the school, prompt and clear information on their child's skills in relation to others typically found at the same age, and provide regular updates on the gains their children are making in respect of these
- staff meet regularly with colleagues in other nursery settings to check that their assessments of children's attainment are consistently accurate across all areas of learning.

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

During the inspection, I met you and shared my lines of enquiry. I also spoke with members of the governing body, the senior teacher, the family support worker and safeguarding coordinator, and the coordinator for children who have SEN and/or disabilities. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I considered the responses of parents from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, any free-text comments, and met parents as they came to collect their children. I took into account parents' views from the school's recent survey. I

scrutinised the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff. We visited different teaching areas, including the outdoor provision. I observed children's behaviour in lessons, and looked at many samples and photographs of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and their plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.