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Mrs Yvonne James  
Headteacher  
Selly Oak Nursery School  
26 Tiverton Road  
Birmingham  
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Dear Mrs James

### **Short inspection of Selly Oak 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.

Governors, staff, parents and carers are unanimous in their view that you persistently drive uncompromising and ambitious improvements. You and all staff are strongly focused on the care and development of each individual child and, as a result, children are at the heart of all you do. The school's continued success has not happened by chance. You and your deputy headteacher are highly reflective. You ensure that staff carefully implement new ideas which help adults and children meet, and overcome, local and national challenges. Together, you are constantly looking for ways to improve even further.

You work closely with the Kings Norton Consortium of schools so that high levels of pertinent information, knowledge and expertise are shared. You are a local leader of education and your deputy headteacher is a specialist leader of education.

All staff at Selly Oak Nursery are committed to meeting children's individual needs. You have created a knowledgeable and skilled team that successfully engages children in their journey of learning. All activities and experiences are planned diligently. Children explore, observe, consider, share, build and record for a wide variety of purposes in a wealth of learning areas and environments.

All learning areas, including those outside, are meticulously planned and organised. They inspire interest and invite investigation and exploration. A governor was not alone when she said how much she wished she was a child at the nursery. You

transformed a bland, grassy area to a small but exciting forest, where children observe and explore. Staff have developed areas for children to observe frogs, feed birds, cook on camp fires and observe seasonal changes. Children look for worms, slugs and spiders and build structures and models from natural materials. In these carefully planned and exciting activities, children learn how to handle and use a range of tools with precision. For example, they confidently use pens, scissors, paint brushes, magnifying glasses, binoculars, hammers, spades and many more.

Governors and parents explained that, during their time at the nursery, children are transformed from 'introverted individuals to confident and excited learners'. Parents' comments in discussions and surveys were unanimously positive. One parent wrote: 'I couldn't ask for a more caring, safe and stimulating environment for my child. Every single member of staff shows a total and uncompromising commitment to the nursery.' Parents confirm that their children cannot wait to come to school each day and they 'come on in leaps and bounds'. As another parent explained: 'Other schools have trees and grass but here the children experience magic. It's wonderful.'

An area for improvement identified at the previous inspection was to provide more opportunities for children to review and comment about their learning. Staff consistently explain to children what they are going to learn in any session and children fully understand what is expected of them. Staff teach the children a suitable vocabulary for their age to consider how well they have done and how they could do better next time. Children are now adept at reviewing their own learning and offering ideas to help them improve. They genuinely want to succeed to the best of their abilities.

Leaders, governors and staff are diligent in their reviews of how well teaching, learning and progress are put into practice. Together, you have formed a team driven by a dedicated sense of purpose where only the best is good enough. Your self-evaluations are meticulous and accurately inform your planned improvements.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You are all united in the belief that all staff, governors, children and parents are one family, where genuine, mutual care is paramount at all times. Nursery staff develop close partnerships with parents prior to children's entry to nursery. As a consequence, staff are aware of individual family circumstances and backgrounds which may hinder or support children's learning and well-being.

All staff receive regular up-to-date training so they fully understand their responsibilities and procedures. In addition, they teach parents about the school's safeguarding and child protection responsibilities as part of their induction to the nursery.

Staff know the indications of harm and understand the different forms of abuse. Concerns about children are reported quickly and leaders lose no time in taking appropriate action. Leaders maintain detailed records regarding the actions taken by

external agencies, as well as those completed within school.

The site manager conducts daily checks on the premises and everyone regularly practises procedures for a range of possible emergencies.

Procedures to recruit, select and check staff are thorough and the school's single central record is compliant.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders place children at the heart of all decision making and invest in staff time and training to ensure their high levels of knowledge and skill. You ensure that your high expectations are clearly understood and consistently applied. You and the deputy headteacher are quick to identify the strengths in others and provide ongoing support to help everyone advance further. As a result, you have helped staff to develop expertise and lead important projects. In driving improvements, you are careful to avoid whims and consistently focus on securing children's progress and welfare. All staff resolutely concentrate on providing children with purposeful learning opportunities. All activities are informed by the staff's meticulous knowledge of children's needs, strengths and interests. You never count the cost of your determined commitment but work collectively as a team so that children can flourish.
- All adults work together to create excellent learning experiences which ensure children's impressive rates of progress and outcomes. You forge close links with parents and ensure that the school's work envelops the whole family. You celebrate each child's individual learning steps, personal development and well-being, whether they are achieved in school or at home. Children typically enter nursery with knowledge and skills below those expected for their age. Staff lose no time in assessing children's strengths and priorities for development. They plan an appropriate and tailored sequence of learning to best match the children's abilities. Every day, staff review how well the children have learned, consider what went well and adapt plans for the following day. They keep meticulous records of children's progress so that the next steps can be planned with precision. As a consequence, children make excellent progress and leave the nursery with knowledge and skills that meet or exceed the standards expected for their age.
- Leaders, staff and governors believe that 'All children are special but some have different needs to enable them to compete on a level playing field.' Staff begin their preparations for children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities prior to the children's enrolment. Staff visit all families at home and invite parents and children into school during the term before the children begin nursery. This contact helps staff to listen to parents' concerns, observe the children first-hand and inform their plans for the children's full inclusion. Staff are well trained and skilled in assessing children's different needs and abilities. They quickly identify children experiencing difficulties and provide appropriate, speedy support. The deputy headteacher loses no time in enlisting specialist support wherever children demonstrate more complex needs. As a result, children achieve excellent rates of progress from their starting points. The deputy

headteacher maintains close links with neighbouring primary schools so that the children's needs and levels of support are known prior to their transition.

- Governors have an unambiguous understanding for their strategic role and statutory responsibilities. They have extensive and appropriate knowledge, skills, experience and expertise to readily take on their individual and collective roles. They are committed to high levels of involvement in the school and make every effort to secure its ongoing success. They carefully consider constraints on the school budget, cut back where necessary but consult and pursue ideas to generate additional funding. They are rightly proud of the school. Nevertheless, they are often in school to independently seek information, analyse evidence and provide feedback on their findings. Governors have an impressive record of training and a full programme ahead to ensure that they continue to contribute fully to the strategic direction of the school and ably monitor its progress.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to promote their excellent practice and provision to the local and wider community.

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

Deana Holdaway

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and a higher-level teaching assistant. I also met with six governors. I observed children in a variety of learning activities and looked at your records of their progress. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the day and considered their responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

I considered your school self-evaluation and improvement plan. In addition, I looked at your school policies for safeguarding, child protection and special educational needs and/or disabilities. I looked at your school website and considered a sample of minutes from governors' meetings.