

Lane Head Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	104139
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	377021
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2012
Lead inspector	Deborah Udakis HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley Foster
Headteacher	Debbie Thorpe - Head of Nursery Cathy Draper - Executive Headteacher
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2009
School address	High Road Lane Head Willenhall WV12 4JQ
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Age group	3–4
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Introduction

Inspection team

Deborah Udakis

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. She observed teaching and learning in 11 part-lessons, amounting to over three and-a-quarter hours in total, seeing both teachers and eight teaching assistants. Discussions were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, members of the governing body, staff and children. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans and policies. She also analysed questionnaires from 74 parents and carers. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.

Information about the school

This nursery school is part of a federation with the local infant and junior schools. As a federated school, leadership is shared between the executive headteacher and the head of the nursery school. Children are admitted in the term following their third birthday. They spend between three and five terms in the school, attending either morning or afternoon sessions.

The vast majority of children are of White British heritage, with a few being at the early stages of learning English. There are also a very small proportion of children who are disabled, or who have special educational needs. There are no children attending in receipt of free school meals. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding nursery school. It has successfully sustained and developed all aspects of excellence identified at the previous inspection, when it was also judged outstanding.
- Leaders and managers at all levels are motivated, enthusiastic and highly skilled. They hold high expectations, aspirations and ambition for the children and their families.
- Children make outstanding or rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development; this supports their outstanding achievement by preparing them very well for their learning across all areas of their development.
- Children’s moral and social development is particularly strong. They are sociable and curious, respectful and caring. They are developing a strong sense of spirituality and moral responsibility through their engagement with the external environment and high quality outdoor learning experiences. Their cultural awareness is well promoted through exciting and high quality celebrations and events. However, everyday opportunities to explore diverse cultures and differences are less obvious.
- Children demonstrate an excellent understanding of the ‘golden rules’ of behaviour and they need little reminding to follow them routinely. They feel safe and secure in the warm and inclusive environment. The school has made excellent strides to improve attendance by 11% in the last year, working very effectively in partnership with parents and carers and the education welfare officer.
- Teaching and assessments are highly effective. Staff have an excellent understanding of the individual learning needs of the children and build strongly on their experiences and contributions to enhance their progress. Characteristics of outstanding teaching are shared across all teaching activities and always support children’s good or better progress.
- The rich and exciting creative curriculum together with the outdoor learning environment features very strongly across all six areas of learning.
- Parents are increasing their skills in parenting and their knowledge and understanding of how children learn as a result of high quality support from staff and attendance at the highly popular ‘Keeping in Touch’ sessions.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate children's routine learning and understanding of how people from other cultures and religions live their lives and contribute to the community as a whole, by July 2012.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

All parents, who made their comments known either in person or through the Ofsted questionnaire, spoke very highly of the school and agree that children are happy and achieving very well. One parent commented; 'My child has grown in confidence and (their) knowledge of letters and numbers far outweighs (other children) at (their) age which I believe is due to the nursery.' There are no evident differences in the achievement of different groups of children. For instance, children with disabilities, or who have special educational needs make just as good progress as that of other children. Most children make significant, rapid and sustained progress. They gain levels of development above those expected for their age by the time they transfer to the Reception classes in other schools. The large majority of children make much better than expected progress due to their highly effective attitudes to learning. Given that most children start with skills below expected levels, this represents excellent achievement.

Most children are significantly ahead of expectations in their ability to persist at activities for extended periods of time. This was demonstrated particularly well by children working in the outdoor play area where they spent considerable time exploring, investigating and experimenting with the large thick sheets of ice that had formed in the water trays. With the excellent support of the staff, constant discussions were maintained with the children which enabled the promotion of their imaginative play and knowledge and understanding of the world. Children gained significantly in their understanding of how ice is formed, its consistency, texture, toughness and fragility. They showed an appreciation of the importance of the environment through the extension of the ice activity as they placed the ice in different areas, on different materials, mixing it with sand and soil to see what happened. This is typical of how the children's learning is successfully promoted following their interests and making excellent use of the outdoor play area.

Quality of teaching

All parents and carers responding to the Ofsted questionnaire agree their children are taught well. As one family wrote, 'All the teachers are focused towards delivering a high standard of teaching and learning and keep us well informed of our (child's) progress'.

Assessments are very robust and individual. There is always an adult somewhere observing and assessing the children. Assessment is a special event for the children too. On their 'special day' they are given additional responsibilities which enable them to demonstrate the progress they have made. There is exemplary practice in the way such assessments are used to adapt and develop day-to-day activities for individuals. Staff listen carefully to the children and build instinctively on their

individual contributions. There is outstanding teaching for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The specialist support from the speech therapist and educational psychologist has proved invaluable in helping staff to address children's individual needs. One-to-one sessions enable a strong focus on individual difficulties and needs; consequently, children make excellent progress.

A key strength of the teaching lays in it the excellent creative curriculum. Teachers captured children's imagination as they extended the Chinese New Year celebratory activities to develop a world of dragons and fairies. During a 'work time' session in the outdoor play area one child told the teacher, 'I have looked for the dragon everywhere and I can't find him'. Another child who was helping to deliver mud pies to the 'Dragon's tree' called out, 'I can see the dragon', as she pointed to a large bird in the sky. This created a huge amount of excitement amongst the children. Their enjoyment and achievement was very evident. This activity clearly showed how effectively children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is supported and developed.

Staff take every opportunity to develop children's speaking and listening skills. For example, children took great joy in their learning with 'Freddy the frog'. Here they made good progress in the knowledge of letters and sounds, which enabled them to explain their thinking and ideas, but also to explore the sounds made by the spoken word. This support for early reading is further strengthened by the school's promotion of a love of picture books and stories.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents and carers say that their children cannot wait to get to nursery and that they arrive eager and ready for their day ahead. Unacceptable behaviour, including bullying, is very rare as all staff are consistent in their high expectations and management of behaviour. Parents and carers also reported that they too were confident that the school's systems were sufficiently robust to deal with any incidents, should they occur. As one parent wrote, 'This is a lovely friendly environment in which my child feels safe and valued.' Children act safely because simple courtesy and consideration for others are embedded in the approach of all adults. As a result, they learn quickly to follow their example. Children were seen supporting one another and offering praise and encouragement when another child was doing a 'good job'. Children are taught to use equipment safely, and show an awareness of others, and their surroundings, which is in advance of their age. Children's emotional wellbeing is extremely well supported. For instance, the Chameleons group provides invaluable support to families in difficulties and the excellent care, guidance and support provided permeates all aspects of the child's time in the school.

The school's excellent promotion of the children's spiritual, moral, social and the generally effective promotion of their cultural development is also a vital part of the school's approach. Behaviour and safety are so good because the children are enabled to be confident, develop self-control, and are comfortable, both with themselves and others. Children play an important role as decision makers on the school council. They all wear the school uniform sweatshirt and are developing a strong sense of belonging to the school. Concerted efforts have been made by staff,

leaders and parents to improve attendance and there are challenging targets to improve attendance further. There is a very strong sense of family and community at the school. This was highlighted in discussions with parents and carers as a major factor in their choice of the school.

Leadership and management

The success of the school is as a result of the strong leadership shown and the pursuit of excellence at all levels of the federation. The governing body plays an important role in the leadership of the school and includes parents and representatives from the wide network of professional partners. Their skills and expertise are successfully deployed to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work. The positive staff development programmes and ongoing performance management are key features that contribute to children's outstanding achievement.

The arrangements to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching are excellent. Regular and systematic performance management systems are well embedded. Some very exciting professional development activities have taken place to extend outdoor play provision and the creative curriculum. These opportunities have proved highly beneficial to the children and can be seen in the exceptional quality of the outdoor learning environment and the excellent curriculum provided. The highly exciting, varied and creative curriculum includes film animation, and literacy features strongly across all topics. Children's social, moral, and spiritual development is very well supported, and they are developing an awareness of other cultures as a result of well-planned special topics. Nevertheless, regular opportunities for them to develop their knowledge of understanding of different cultures and religions are limited.

Safeguarding arrangements are very effective. Exemplary teamwork across agencies ensures that children and families are safeguarded. All staff, leaders and governors are regularly trained in safeguarding matters such as child protection and recruitment of staff. As a result, children and families receive prompt attention and excellent support when concerns arise.

Parents play an active and vital role in many aspects of the life of the school and partnerships with parents and carers are strong. Leaders and staff take their responsibilities to ensure that the school is fully inclusive very seriously and staff do all they can to meet the individual needs of all children and families. Staff and leaders are very sensitive to the needs of the community and take positive steps to overcome barriers to learning and challenge discrimination. Parent volunteers are well supported in their roles as support assistants. 'Hedgehogs' parent and toddler group runs each week. It is organised by parent volunteers with the full support and cooperation of staff at the school.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



3 February 2012

Dear children

Inspection of Lane Head Nursery School WV12 4JQ

Thank you so much for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit very much, talking with you and seeing all the exciting things you do each day. I think your nursery is outstanding. The school's motto states, 'Every day, in every way, everyone matters' and this is seen in all that the teachers and leaders do. The adults are very skilled at caring for you, keeping you safe and making sure you do as well as you can in everything you do. They are excellent at knowing how to make things even better.

These are just some of the things that are excellent at your nursery.

- It is a very friendly and safe place in which to work and play.
- You make outstanding progress in your learning.
- You enjoy school very much because your teachers are very good at making sure there is always something to interest you.
- The outdoor areas and activities are excellent and give you many exciting things to do.
- You concentrate very hard at everything you do, you are caring and kind and work very well together. Your behaviour is excellent. Well done!
- You are always curious and use your imagination very well indeed.

I have asked your teachers to do one thing to help you learn even more. I have asked them to make sure that you have opportunities to talk about people from other cultures and religions through your play. You can help by coming to nursery every day and by always working as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Udakis
Her Majesty's Inspector

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