

Etherley Lane Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113976
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	378777
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
Lead inspector	Jayne Utting 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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Lee
Headteacher	Leslie Patterson
Date of previous school inspection	22 October 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jayne Utting

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 16 sessions led by one teacher and three early years practitioners. Meetings were held with parents and carers, members of the governing body, health professionals, community members, and staff. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan and safeguarding policies. The online questionnaire (Parent View) was looked at, but no responses were recorded. The inspector analysed 29 questionnaires from parents, carers, and others completed by staff.

Information about the school

This average-sized nursery school is located in a residential area on the outskirts of Bishop Auckland. The nursery was built in 1971 and is on one level, with extensive grounds. These have been developed since the last inspection to provide an outdoor classroom, which incorporates a woodland area.

The large majority of children are of White British heritage. Approximately 13% are disabled children or those who have special educational needs and the number known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The assistant headteacher took up post in September 2011.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	1
Achievement of children	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of children	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- Etherley Lane Nursery is an outstanding school, which fulfils its philosophy to 'foster in children a love of learning'. Its strengths include the promotion of children's excellent spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Children, clearly, love coming to school, behave impeccably, and have a heightened awareness of their own and others' safety. As a consequence, the school is a harmonious learning community, where every child feels valued and respected and their learning flourishes as a result.
- All children receive highly effective individualised support from extremely skilled early years practitioners, who have a thorough knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff understand the principles of learning through play and this approach to children's learning is highly valued. As a result, all children, including disabled children and those who have special educational needs, make outstanding progress from their starting points and achieve exceptionally well.
- The headteacher has introduced clear pathways for development in relation to 'early writing' and children's personal development and welfare are nurtured very successfully. The environment is rich in resources to develop early literacy and communication skills and, as a result, children have made significant progress in this key area. There is recognition by leaders of a need to continue to monitor children's achievement closely in relation to using numbers for simple calculation, in order to ensure that they make equally rapid progress in this particular strand of their learning.
- Robust systems for tracking and assessment ensure that staff have an excellent knowledge of individual children's needs, interests, and talents. They use this information successfully to provide a rich and varied curriculum, which offers children a wealth of memorable experiences and numerous opportunities to engage in high-quality learning experiences.

- The absolute determination and drive of the headteacher, ably supported by her senior leadership team, has been central to improving children's achievement and raising the standard of teaching. Development plans are based on a thorough and accurate understanding of the school's performance and the headteacher is adept at drawing upon the strengths of every individual staff member to excellent effect.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase children's achievement in relation to their developing calculating skills, ensuring that they make equally rapid progress in this specific strand, in line with their achievement across other areas of learning.

Main Report

Achievement of children

The large majority of children enter the Nursery with skills which are at the levels expected for their age. They are eager to attend and respond positively to the exciting and stimulating opportunities, both indoors and outside, which develop their interests and learning across the curriculum. Their levels of achievement in relation to their personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical development are particularly commendable and children make outstanding progress in developing those skills which will help them in the future. All children show exceptionally high levels of curiosity, imagination and concentration and are developing into highly successful, independent, active learners. They play a dynamic role in their learning, are confident to offer their ideas, and respond enthusiastically to the daily challenges offered. Progress in relation to children's developing knowledge of simple calculation is slightly slower than other areas of the curriculum, but this is being monitored closely by the leadership team. By the time they leave school, most children have made outstanding progress, including in communication, language and literacy, entering Reception Year with skills and abilities well above expectations for their age.

Highly comprehensive systems to track children's progress are used effectively to identify those children who need extra support and to plan appropriate intervention activities. The inspector observed children in highly effective small-group, focused activities, which enabled them to make rapid progress and improve their self-esteem and confidence. The innovative 'dough gym' sessions, which focus on developing some of the physical skills necessary for early writing, have secured accelerated progress for specific children. Disabled children and those with special educational needs make the same excellent progress as their peers, due to the highly effective support they receive from teachers, early years practitioners and, where necessary, individual outreach support.

All parents and carers who responded to the inspection survey report that the school helps their children to develop skills in communication, reading, writing, and

mathematics and all consider, justifiably, that their children are making excellent progress.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is outstanding and this is reflected in comments by parents and carers, all of whom consider their children are taught extremely well. Staff are highly adept at using the interesting and extremely well-equipped environment to encourage children's active participation and this, combined with inspirational and innovative teaching, ensures all children are motivated to learn. For example, in a 'woodland session', children were inspired to explore their environment fully, digging for bugs, using tape measures to determine and compare the length of worms they found, recording the results on clipboards, and referring to the nature books provided to find out more about them. Others cooperated exceptionally well to build racing cars out of logs, ground sheets and twigs, skilfully using small tools to aid their construction. Completely child-initiated, excellent use was made of open-ended questioning which both encouraged and extended children's thinking and learning further. In another activity, children built 'Big Ben', positioning pipes in order to get water to flow from the tower into a drain in the garden. Children were observed discussing the effect on the water flow of raising and lowering the pipes and were encouraged to experiment further, altering the angle of the different pipe sections. These activities illustrate the way in which teachers, consistently, promote children's excellent spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, in this instance, by inspiring children to appreciate the natural world.

There has been large investment in improving the teaching of communication, language and literacy, particularly in relation to the development of early writing skills. The provision of clipboards and the repositioning of resources outdoors has been particularly successful in hastening boys' progress in writing and narrowing the gap between their performance and that of the girls. Staff take photographs of children enacting stories and then, in small groups, use these as a basis to encourage children to write their own tales. Children flourish in this praise-rich environment, which also works well to build their confidence. Staff instil in children a love of books and they enjoy talking together about their favourite stories, with teachers encouraging the use of correct terminology such as title, author, and illustrator.

Staff assess children's learning carefully through high-quality observations of their play. They are highly adept at using this excellent information about each child's next steps to provide sharply focused, timely support and intervention, matched well to the individual needs of children. This has a notable impact on the quality of each child's learning.

Behaviour and safety of children

Children's excellent behaviour is a strength of the school. Staff have very high expectations of children and set clear boundaries, which are reinforced consistently and understood well by children. As a result, all children are exceptionally polite and courteous and most understand the importance of sharing, listening and taking

turns. Daily opportunities to meet in key worker groups ensure that children build up extremely warm, secure relationships with these specific adults and they were observed turning to them for support if they felt upset or unsure at any time. There are no recorded instances of bullying and parents and carers express absolute confidence in the school's systems for dealing with any issues that might arise.

Children have a heightened sense of how to keep themselves and others safe and, as a result, become active, independent learners quickly. At every opportunity, children are encouraged to manage risk in a safe and supportive environment. For example, they are given the opportunity to climb trees, whittle sticks with peelers, use small tools and toast marshmallows. They do this safely because they are aware of the rules and boundaries and understand how to keep themselves safe. Children are able to identify for themselves areas which pose a risk and are adept at explaining how to manage these situations. For example, children reminded the teacher to take care with a peeler she was holding as it was sharp. Children understand also how risks outdoors might change with the seasons, for example by looking out for nettles that might have grown in the warmer weather.

The school promotes prompt and regular attendance as an important preparation for primary school. Absences or regular lateness are followed up carefully with parents and carers. As a result, the school can demonstrate consistently high attendance. The school is acutely aware of its cultural make up and, with the support of the governing body, has been active in establishing an international link with a school in Bangladesh. Children spoke enthusiastically about the visit they received from this school's senior staff earlier in the year.

Leadership and management

The headteacher leads with a clear vision for excellence and a firm commitment to improving the life chances of local children and families. She is focused upon developing a school where all children not only attain well, but also make outstanding progress. The school curriculum is wide and varied with a strong emphasis on learning through talking, play and exploration. This outstanding curriculum has made a significant contribution to children's excellent spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, enabling children to develop into active, confident and curious learners who are extremely well prepared for their transition to Reception Year.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has undertaken an in-depth review of the impact of the school's work and, together with her senior leadership team, has developed a highly effective system to assess and track the progress of all children. There have been a range of professional development opportunities for staff, linked to robust strategies to monitor the quality and impact of teaching. These include developing the role and responsibilities of key persons, ensuring they are held to account fully for the achievements and progress of children in their groups. Planning and analysis now focuses on the quality of children's learning and this ethos is embedded in the practice of every member of staff. Highly reflective, the head teacher has taken inspiration from a wealth of research into effective early years practice and has looked beyond the school boundaries to learn from the best. As a result, children benefit from a range of innovative and imaginative teaching

strategies. Given the school's in-depth self-evaluation and its exceptional track record of improvement, the capacity to improve is excellent.

The governing body is highly knowledgeable about the school and supports the senior leadership team well. It supports the drive to improve the life chances of every child by ensuring that robust safeguarding procedures are in place. Records are updated regularly and staff are well trained, to support the most potentially vulnerable children in the school. The governing body discharges its statutory responsibilities very well and members are regular visitors to the school.

The school places a great emphasis on ensuring equality and tackling discrimination of any kind. The school can point to striking examples where children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable have been supported extremely well, enabling them to engage fully in school life and learning. Staff have built excellent relationships with parents and carers through effective communication, which includes access to beautifully presented individual learning journals, as well as a variety of planned opportunities to come into Nursery to learn and work alongside their children.

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 children's needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
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 children. 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 child's 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 children 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 children are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the children's 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.



16 March 2012

Inspection of Etherley Lane Nursery School, Bishop Auckland, DL14 7RF

Dear Children

Thank you for showing me around your Nursery when I came to visit. I enjoyed helping you to make your rope swing, plant flowers, make sandwiches and watching you all learning so much in your fantastic outdoor area. You all took the time to tell me about the things you enjoy best when you are at Nursery. I hope you are still enjoying your woodland sessions and that the tree dragon loved all the letters and presents you left for him. Everything you told and showed me helped me to decide that Etherley Lane is an outstanding nursery school.

I was very interested to see all the different places where you can play in Nursery. Most of all I liked the woodland area, the giant sand pit and your fabulous garden area. You behaved very well and I was impressed by how you help and look after each other. All your teachers showed me that they know you very well and they understand the things that you need to learn next so you are ready to start big school in September. You told me that you enjoy going to Nursery, love your teachers and feel safe when you are there. Your parents and carers also told me that they are happy with the Nursery and that you have brilliant teachers.

It was lovely to hear how well you are doing at writing and I enjoyed listening to all the amazing stories you were writing with your teachers. To help your school to be even better, I have asked your teachers to find ways to help you learn even more about numbers during your time at nursery school.

You should be very proud of how hard you all work at school and how kind you are to all your friends there. Well done!

Yours sincerely

Jayne Utting
Her Majesty's Inspector

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