

Oxhill Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113970
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	378775
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2012
Lead inspector	Linda Buller

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	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Mellor
Headteacher	Catherine Madden
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Linda Buller
Deborah Wylie

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 17 sessions led by one teacher and six nursery practitioners. The inspection team held discussions with staff and with representatives of the governing body. There were insufficient responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) available for use in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at data about achievement across the school and scrutinised examples of children's work in learning journal records. They also looked at documents including, the school's self-evaluation information, the school's improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and the school's monitoring records. They examined evidence regarding the safeguarding of children. The inspectors analysed 58 questionnaires received from parents and carers as well as those completed by staff and children.

Information about the school

The school is larger in size than others of its type. Children are generally admitted the term after their third birthday. Most children are from a White British heritage. Children attend part-time for 15 hours throughout the week. Parents and carers may also buy additional sessions. This provision includes before-school and after-school care, plus the provision of lunch for those attending the nursery for full days. The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs is above average. The nursery is designated as an outreach centre for children identified by the local authority as having specific special educational needs. A number of staff changes have taken place since the last inspection. A new headteacher took up post in January 2010. There has been significant disruption to staffing due to long term staff absence. Several members of staff were absent at the time of the inspection.

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	2
Achievement of children	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of children	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. A strength of the school is the provision for disabled children and those who have special educational needs. This high quality provision results in the outstanding achievement of these children. The school is not yet outstanding, because, although good overall, the quality of teaching is not consistently effective. As a result, most children make good rather than outstanding progress by the time they leave.
- Achievement is good, ensuring that children are prepared well for their next stage of education. From starting points which, for most, are below those typical for their age on entry to the school, children make good progress to reach expected levels of attainment by the time they leave across all six areas of their learning.
- Teaching is good and staff are particularly skilled at developing children’s confidence and emotional well-being. Staff work well as a team, providing a good range of engaging indoor and outdoor experiences. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to intervene to support, or to extend learning, particularly in those activities which children initiate for themselves and for children of higher ability.
- Children behave well and feel safe at the nursery. Staff encourage them to take responsibility for their actions and effectively explain expectations. Consequently, children play well in collaboration with others and demonstrate a good understanding of how to safely take risks in adventurous activities.
- The monitoring of the school’s work is effective in identifying the strengths and weaknesses within provision. This has led to good improvement in the environment provided for children’s learning. The leadership of teaching is good as is the management of performance which is linked to further training activities. The governing body provides satisfactory management. It provides good support, but has not been sufficiently rigorous in reviewing its statutory duties in relation to the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the consistency in the quality of teaching in order to further improve the rate of children's progress by;
 - ensuring consistent and effective evaluation within all observations of children's learning
 - ensuring the consistent identification of the next steps which children need to take in their learning
 - staff taking every opportunity to support, scaffold and extend learning, particularly in those activities which children initiate for themselves and for those children of higher ability.

- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by;
 - increasing the governing body's knowledge of the statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - implementing rigorous systems of monitoring to check that all statutory requirements are fully met.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Initially on entry to the school, a number of children have limited vocabulary and lack confidence in their own abilities. Sensitive support and good working partnerships with other agencies, parents and carers help them to quickly close the gap between their levels of attainment and that of their peers. All children, whatever their prior attainment, achieve well and make good progress in developing good levels of independence and confidently learn new skills. As a result, attainment is generally in line with those expected when children transfer to Reception classes in their primary schools. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs achieve outstandingly well because the exceptionally well-thought-out provision, tailored to their individual needs and delivered by highly trained staff, enables each child to thrive.

Children make good progress in developing early reading skills. They have many opportunities to enjoy books with an adult or with their friends. During the inspection, children were observed retelling the story of 'The Billy Goats Gruff' as they built the bridge and selected the animals, changing the tone of their voices to reflect their understanding of the feelings and roles of the different characters.

The vast majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire are pleased with the progress their children make. A small number expressed the view that although they are confident that overall their children make good progress, occasionally they could be challenged to reach higher levels of attainment. Inspection evidence supports this view, particularly in relation to the small number of children who enter the school with levels of ability beyond those expected for their age.

Quality of teaching

Inspection findings endorse the view of parents and carers that children are well taught. A strength in teaching is the organisation of adult-led activities within which skilful discussion and questioning is used effectively to meet each child's needs and to link different areas of learning. For example, when being introduced to Lycra for the first time, resources, together with good quality questioning, were used in an imaginative way to promote good language development, the extension of number recognition and to enhance children's skills of investigation.

The creation of a stimulating environment and a wide breadth of curriculum opportunities help children to develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. In one class, children watched with intense fascination and awe as cracks appeared in living eggs. With guidance from staff they were able to discuss the life cycle of hens and were very keen to hypothesise whether the chick about to hatch would be a boy or a girl! Regular opportunities to meet in key worker groups ensure that children build up warm, secure relationships with these specific adults and each other.

Staff, clearly, know each child very well and use the information gained from observations to note children's interests and responses to the activities offered. Detailed daily records are kept of the progress made by disabled children and those with specific special educational needs. Staff expertly use this information to ensure that these children are fully integrated into daily activities while also meeting their very specific needs. For example, one child demonstrated the excellent progress he has made in the development of independent movement which allowed him to access the water play; his face shone with pride as he joined his friends in measuring the water needed to fill cylinders. However, observations of children's learning and records kept of the progress which they make over time are not always of this same high quality. Observations by some staff tend to describe involvement in activities rather than evaluating the progress made. Similarly, progress records do not consistently record the next steps in learning which children need to make if a rapid rate of progress is to be maintained. As a result, subsequent planning does not always support staff, particularly those who are less experienced, to recognise children, particularly the more-able, who would benefit from adult intervention to scaffold or extend learning.

Behaviour and safety of children

Children's good behaviour supports their learning well. This is reflected in the views of parents and carers, none of whom raised any concerns regarding the behaviour of children in school. The majority of children understand the importance of sharing, listening and taking turns. They are thoughtful and sensitive when working alongside friends, who are less physically able than themselves, offering to help put on shoes or pass resources. Children are enthusiastic and very keen to learn new skills. They listen carefully to adults and know that rules and routines are to be followed so that they all have an equal opportunity to do well.

The majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire overwhelmingly agree that the school ensures their child is well looked after and feels safe, and this is the view of the inspection. Children quickly become active learners because they feel secure and are encouraged to manage risk in a safe and supportive environment. For example, they are given the opportunity to climb on outdoor apparatus and jump soft play blocks. Hygiene routines, such as hand washing are well established and understood.

The school promotes prompt and regular attendance as an important preparation for the next stage of education and diligently follows up any absences. As a result, attendance is above average.

Leadership and management

The headteacher leads with a clear vision for excellence and a firm commitment to the school being one in which all children are warmly welcomed. All children are equally valued and there is no place for discrimination. The school has a deservedly high reputation with parents and carers of those children who are disabled or who have a statement of their special educational needs. Their view that the school enables their children to make outstanding progress is supported by inspection evidence.

The headteacher has led an in-depth review of the impact of the school's work, which has led to a number of improvements, not least the creation of an environment in which children can grow in confidence and take ownership of their own learning. Monitoring of the quality and impact of teaching has led to a range of professional development opportunities for staff being identified and implemented. Prolonged staff absence has, however, hindered the school in sustaining previously identified outstanding performance. The governing body supports the staffs' commitment to the care and well-being of each child by the implementation of recommended safeguarding practice. They have provided good quality support to the school in the drive to tackle staff absence and improve the quality of teaching. However, this has, at times, led to insufficient rigour in maintaining the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework with relation to qualified teacher ratio. Nevertheless, the school has been successful in ensuring that children receive continuity of care within a rich and stimulating curriculum which is designed and modified to follow children's interests. Staff effectively organise a wealth of visits to extend children's knowledge and understanding across all six areas of learning. This together with carefully planned improvements to the learning environment within the school provides a strong contribution to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Both indoors and out, exciting opportunities are provided to explore, investigate and experience diversity and the importance of collaboration. This, together with the appointment of staff who are able to model good practice, ensures the school's continuing good capacity to improve further.

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.
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.



26 March 2012

Dear Children

Inspection of Oxhill Nursery School, Stanley, DH9 7LR

Thank you very much for making the inspection team feel so welcome when we visited your nursery school recently. You all took the time to tell us about the things you enjoy best when you are at nursery. I hope you are still enjoying watching the chicks hatch.

Everything you showed the inspection team helped us to decide that Oxhill is a good nursery school. It was good to see how much you enjoy all of the activities that are provided for you. You behave really well and we were impressed by how you help and look after each other. All the staff care for you well and those of you who find things a bit difficult are looked after exceptionally well and make outstanding progress in what you are able to do.

Your parents and carers told us that they are happy with the nursery and that you have good teachers. We agree that most of the time the teaching you receive is good. Occasionally the adults could help you to extend your learning even further. We have therefore asked your school to make some improvements to how your teachers check your learning so that they always help all of you to do as well as you can in everything you do. To help with this we have also asked the governing body of your school to make sure that there are always the correct number of qualified teachers present in the 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

Linda Buller
Lead Inspector

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