

# Heath Lane Nursery School

Heath Lane, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1TT

**Inspection dates** 18–19 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Children achieve well and make good progress in all areas of learning. They leave well-equipped to join Reception classes in other schools.
- The personal, social and emotional development of all children is a significant strength of the school.
- Children settle very quickly into the Nursery routines. They form very good relationships with adults and with each other.
- Children thoroughly enjoy being at school and they behave exceptionally well. Staff work very well as a team to make sure children are safe. All children are extremely well looked after.
- Teachers and support staff act as good role models and promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, so that children understand the fairness of taking turns and helping each other to share.
- Teaching is of good quality; adults successfully develop children's key skills and help them to grow in confidence.
- Some staff are highly effective at helping disabled children or those with special educational needs to think about their learning. This helps to develop these children's learning as they are encouraged to explain their thinking.
- The headteacher's good leadership and management have guided the Nursery through a period of change and had a positive impact on improving teaching.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some tasks and activities are too easy for children who could manage harder ones. This is because teachers do not make full use of the information they have about what children already know and can do.
- Not all key workers are sufficiently involved in taking responsibility for the amount of progress which children make in the Nursery.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed sessions taught by two teachers and seven other key workers over four and a half hours, including two group reading sessions. Some of these were jointly observed with the headteacher. The inspector also visited the breakfast club and a morning session held in the children's club.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher, teaching staff, support staff and the special needs coordinator. One telephone call was made to a representative of the local authority. The inspector spoke informally with children during the observation times.
- A wide range of documentation was looked at including improvement plans and school self-evaluation, as well as assessment data from the monitoring of children's progress. School policies and performance management documentation and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance, together with the school's safeguarding procedures, were also evaluated.
- The inspector took account of the 35 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and views of several parents and carers who spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- Questionnaires from 17 staff were considered.

## Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is an average-sized nursery school where children attend either morning or afternoon sessions.
- The large majority of children are White British. Although well below average, an increasingly wide range of ethnicities is represented. The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is also increasing but is still well below average.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs is above average although there are currently no children with statements of special educational needs. No nursery-aged children are eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium, the additional funding provided by the government.
- The school uses part of another building close by, owned by South Hill Early Years Centre, for extended day care provision. This is known as the children's club and provides care and education for children from the age of 3 to 8 years old. Working in conjunction with the Nursery, it provides wrap-around care. On offer are a breakfast club, lunch club, after-school club, holiday club and three hour morning and afternoon sessions.
- The school shares premises and works in partnership with the Pat Lewis Child Development Centre, an NHS service, and the Heath Lane Children's Centre. Neither of these were part of this inspection.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend learning by using assessment information on individual children's achievements to:
  - make sure that planning links closely to observations and focuses closely on what children are expected to learn rather than on activities to be covered
  - make sure that tasks and activities consistently challenge children, especially those who are more able
  - ensure that key workers are held responsible for the amount of progress that all children make in their group.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- When children join the Nursery, their skills and knowledge in all the areas of learning are below those expected for their age. Children achieve well during their year in the Nursery and, by the time they transfer into Reception classes, all have made good progress.
- All adults successfully build good relationships with children and help them grow in confidence. Some are highly effective at helping children to think about what they are learning and to develop their basic skills as they explain their thoughts. These skills are particularly helpful in promoting the good progress made by disabled children and those who have special educational needs.
- Home visits have helped staff to become familiar with children's interests, abilities and understanding. A good example of how this was used to support learning when children were discussing the birds they were watching through their binoculars. The key worker was able to remind a child of the birds that they had seen in the child's garden when the home visit was made. Evident delight was shown at this reminder and it sparked more discussion about the feeding habits of birds. This allowed the child's language skills to develop successfully.
- The welcoming start and supportive end to each session provides daily opportunities for parents and carers to talk with staff about their children's needs, interests and development. This not only helps staff to get to know each child really well but it also supports and informs the Learning Journey portfolios, which record important milestones in the child's development.
- Improved tracking and assessment systems are helping staff to identify any gaps in children's learning. However, planning is not linked closely enough to adults' observations of the achievements of individual children. As a result, some activities are not sufficiently engaging or demanding for those children capable of harder work.
- Children handle books with care and they thoroughly enjoyed a story, showing good recall skills when a new story in a series about a bear they were familiar with was read. They were able to join in with familiar words and think what might come next.
- Children's counting skills have improved because they are incorporated into the many activities they eagerly take part in during their time in the Nursery. Children enjoy singing and acting out the rhyming songs that include using their knowledge of numbers. Other ways that have helped are through the good variety of games they play and through the short adult led sessions on counting numbers in sequence.
- Staff provide well-tailored additional support for the very few children who speak English as an additional language and those who find learning difficult. These children make good progress because of the exceptional care and provision of closely targeted support provided. Should the need arise, the school takes full advantage of the expertise provided by the on-site child development centre.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good. Strengths include staff working well together as a team and their expertise in teaching young children. The Nursery and children's club are organised so that children know exactly where to locate resources and they are given the freedom to make choices and move

between the well-resourced indoor and outdoor areas. This promotes children's independence skills successfully.

- Teaching makes a positive contribution to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly in supporting children in getting on well together. Relationships between children and adults are consistently excellent. Staff promote children's personal development exceptionally well, for example, by teaching social skills such as turn-taking. Consequently, children enjoy their learning and contribute well to their own and each other's learning with self-assurance.
- Very positive arrangements are in place for the beginning and end of sessions. This enables children to settle quickly into the wide range of activities provided. They are eager to tell their parents and carers when they arrive to collect them what they have been learning that day.
- There are good opportunities for children to learn outdoors through the use of woodland areas. This regular programme of outdoor activities is effective in developing their confidence and social skills as well as developing a love of nature. There was such excitement when children found some snails and learnt how thrushes find ways to eat snails for their breakfast.
- Language and early reading skills are developed well. All staff encourage a love of reading and the school is making sure that all adults understand and teach the same way of linking sounds with letters. Through a good range of small toys and access to the well laid out grounds, children's understanding of the world is developed successfully.
- There is a good balance between activities children choose and those that adults lead. Children are motivated to explore and investigate through good use of resources, for example they fill and empty containers of water, dig in sand, make models, paint pictures, create stories or attempt to write their names. Outdoor activities effectively promote physical development.
- Although teaching is consistently good, some tasks and activities do not always extend learning enough, particularly for those children who could manage harder ones. This is because planning by all staff is not linked closely enough to observations and too often focuses on what activities are to be covered rather than expectations of what is to be learnt.
- Children's learning is assessed frequently, with key workers making careful observations of their groups. Staff have also established well-developed records using the school's digital cameras, providing a photographic record of individual children's progress. As yet, not enough use is made of this information by key workers to decide if children are making enough progress.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Relationships are a significant strength of the school and the children's club. The support children receive from their key workers helps them to be confident and independent.
  - Children are eager to come to school each day and they take part in the activities with enormous enjoyment. The views of parents and carers expressed in questionnaires confirm how much their children enjoy coming to school.
  - Children behave exceptionally well. The wide range of resources and good quality provision
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makes sure that there is always something to engage them and encourage them to be inquisitive. Children help to tidy resources and they follow routines and instructions very well. Children learn to play well together and there are no recorded incidents of racism or bullying of any kind.

- For those who stay to lunch, lunch time proceeds in an orderly way with children patiently waiting their turn. They are encouraged to eat using their knives and forks and do so very well. The same good routines were observed in the breakfast club and effectively develop children's social skills.
- Systems for keeping children safe are high priority and children quickly learn how to keep themselves safe. This was evidenced when children were observed enjoying the outdoor obstacle course where they took great care not to knock anyone off or over as they completed the circuit. Children understand the routines they are expected to follow in terms of health and hygiene. For example, they remember to wash their hands before they eat and know they must wear aprons or overalls when painting or using glue.
- The children learn to celebrate diversity through festivals such as Chinese New Year and Diwali. They also enjoy a wide range of books that feature cultures and lives from around the world. The school works very hard with parents and carers to ensure that children take full advantage of what the school offers by attending regularly.
- The parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire and the school's own survey confirm that children's behaviour and safety are typically outstanding all the time.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The strong and quietly determined leadership of the headteacher has successfully maintained and built on the good outcomes and provision found at the time of the last inspection. Improvements have been supported and sustained by the development of monitoring systems of children's progress and the regular meetings to review children's progress. Good relationships have been forged with the various groups who share the school site and these have been used to the benefit of families in the school community. The school is well placed to continue its improvement from an already strong position.
  - The well-planned curriculum, with a wide range of additional activities provided through visits and visitors, supports all areas of learning very effectively. The indoor and outdoor areas are highly stimulating for all children. Although key workers are informed about their roles and responsibilities within the setting, they are not all fully involved in the monitoring of learning activities. This means that they are not totally aware of a few children who are making less than expected progress.
  - The management of performance is robust and the well-planned programme of training and support provides staff with a good understanding of developments in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
  - Provision in the children's club is of good quality, offering children a happy and supportive place to experience a wide range of different opportunities and develop their skills. Staff are sensitive to children's needs and do their best to help those who stay to feel settled and grow in confidence. Consistent leadership help children to grow used to expectations and to behave very
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well.

- Under the leadership of the headteacher, staff from both settings work well together to improve the quality of outcomes further for example by sharing good practice. Children’s club staff make focused observations of children’s skills and development, and review them regularly to ensure provision is well adapted to their individual needs. The setting pays good attention to all aspects of children’s welfare, providing access to healthy food, plenty of water and opportunities for rest.
  - Strong liaison developed by the headteacher between the Nursery, children’s centre and the development centre provides robust support for the different needs of the families in the school community.
  - The local authority has provided light touch support for this good school, successfully supporting the ongoing improvements.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Governors have a good understanding of the school’s performance, the strengths and areas that need to be developed further.
    - They challenge and effectively support the school through robust monitoring systems. They make regular visits to the school to observe first hand the quality of provision and learning outcomes.
    - Governors are well aware of the quality of staff training and support, how staff are held to account for the performance of the school and the links between performance and pay progression.
    - Governors make sure that all statutory responsibilities, including safeguarding, are met.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117070
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	401642

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	82
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Norman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachel Heath
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 July 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01442 255418
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