

Guildford Children's Centre

Hazel Avenue, Bellfield, Guildford, Surrey GU1 1NR

Inspection dates

24–25 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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 make good progress in the key skills of communication and language and physical development. They gain early reading, writing and mathematical skills well.
- Children make outstanding progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They are very eager to attend, behave well and show an excellent understanding of how to stay safe.
- There is strong provision for disabled children, those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Children in the specialist resourced provision make excellent progress because staff are highly skilled in supporting children with complex needs.
- Staff work very well as a team. Good teaching and well-focused activities concentrate on children's interests. Some teaching of small groups of children is of high quality.
- The school has excellent links with parents. Strong coordination between the Children's Centre and the school enables the individual needs of children and their families to be identified early and very effective support provided.
- Senior leaders, together with the governing body, provide good leadership and have ensured that the Nursery continues to provide well for its children.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Role play is not always used well enough for children to develop their ideas or their early literacy skills.
- A few staff are not sufficiently involved in helping children to learn during play.
- There are not enough opportunities for middle leaders to share their expertise across the two sites to promote the highest quality teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 learning sessions provided by five teachers as well as early years staff assisting children in their learning. Over a third of lessons seen were joint observations with the acting headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, nursery staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. They also observed the headteacher reporting back to teachers on the quality of learning and children’s achievement in lessons.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the school’s improvement plan, governing body minutes and school assessments showing children’s attainment and progress, and other documentation provided by the school.
- Inspectors met some parents informally at the start and end of the school day and took into account the 23 responses to the on-line Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Eileen Chadwick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Clifford Walker

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized nursery school. The school occupies two sites which are two miles apart. One is in a residential area at Hazel Avenue, north of Guildford and one in York Road in Guildford town centre. Children mainly attend on a part-time basis for either a morning or afternoon session, although some attend sessions from 9am to 2pm.
- The overall proportion of children with disabilities or special educational needs is above average. This includes 11 children in the specialist resourced provision for assessing and meeting the needs of children with more complex needs. These include speech and language difficulties, autism and physical disabilities. These children are fully integrated into the mainstream nursery school.
- Most children are White British, although approximately one fifth speak English as an additional language, which is above average.
- The substantive headteacher has been absent since May and the deputy headteacher is the acting headteacher. Senior leaders are receiving support from the local authority during the headteacher's absence. There have been substantial changes to teaching and support staff over the past year.
- The headteacher and governing body manage the on-site children's centre and early years child care provision on both sites. These establishments were not inspected at this time and their previous reports can be found on the Ofsted website.
- Children make frequent use of the on-site Forest School which promotes children's understanding and care of the environment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by making sure that staff:
 - help children to make the most of role play activities to help them learn
 - provide opportunities for early reading and writing during role play
 - ensure staff are more effectively involved to support children in the activities they choose for themselves.
- Develop the roles of key middle leaders so they take a strong part in helping to promote high quality teaching and achievement across both sites.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The majority of children enter the school with levels of knowledge and skills below the levels expected for their age. Children, including disabled children and those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make at least good progress so that, by the time they leave, most are reaching age-related expectations in all areas.
- Children in the specialist resourced provision make exceptional progress in their speech, language and social development. Extremely regular, high quality teaching in small groups is precisely matched to children's individual needs in specific language areas. Children are fully included in the nursery activities so they can develop their interests and learn new skills such as playing alongside other children and taking turns.
- Children make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They are taught and follow nursery rules, which include listening well, sharing and playing together. Children become very adept in selecting and carefully using resources to develop their ideas, for example when choosing construction kits to make structures such as towers.
- Children develop their language, early literacy and mathematical skills well. Small group activities develop children's social and language skills very well, for example when children explore and talk about the different colours and textures of pumpkins and seeds when helping to make pumpkin soup. They learn to love books, for example when sharing a book with an adult about autumn leaves after making leaf collections in the nursery gardens.
- By the time they leave the nursery, the majority can use their knowledge of sounds and letters to identify sounds at the beginning of words and make real efforts to write their names.
- Children achieve well in their mathematical development. This was seen, for example, when older children accurately counted leaves during their Autumn investigations. However, children's progress occasionally slows when activities for role play are not exciting or do not include enough opportunities for early reading and writing. This prevents children from consistently making rapid progress.
- Outdoor learning is highly valued by staff and the children, and supports the good progress children make in their physical development. Children are encouraged to be active and to develop their coordination and movement by riding on wheeled toys and climbing and balancing. However, staff do not always intervene sufficiently to help children to refine their skills.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good over time. Actions to secure consistently excellent teaching have been hampered by the significant number of staff changes.
- The relationships between staff and children are excellent. Staff communicate with the children in a natural and supportive way and there are high levels of respect and understanding. Bilingual staff use their skills well to ensure children understand, feel secure and learn new vocabulary.
- The key person system works well. Each key person has detailed knowledge of the children in their group and is very skilled in supporting children who have just started nursery. Their detailed assessments of children's skills and needs, combined with parents' own observations, contribute well to the key person's understanding and teachers' planning for children's different needs.
- Staff promote children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development well. The Forest School activities promote children's sense of wonder in nature as well as their understanding of the world around them. There is a good balance between activities children choose for themselves and those led by the adults.

- Very good resources are provided on both sites. The indoor and outdoor areas on the York Road site are used particularly well for developing children's language and creative development through role play. For example, children were observed making rapid progress in developing their imagination, vocabulary and self-confidence when selecting their own resources as they created a pirate ship.
- During such high quality role play as in the pirate ship, staff use questioning particularly well to challenge children. However, this is not totally consistent across the two sites because some staff are new and still acquiring expertise. Occasionally, adults do not intervene quickly enough to stimulate children's learning during play. Indoor and outdoor role play activities are not always as engaging as they should be, including for stimulating early reading and writing.
- High quality small group sessions for children receiving specialist resourced provision across both sites are based on expert knowledge and advice. This addresses children's specific speech and communication skills and enables them to make rapid progress in their language development and adjustment to nursery routines.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- There is a consistent and sensitive approach to behaviour management which ensures that staff have high expectations of children's behaviour. A compassionate approach by staff helps to reinforce children's proper understanding of right and wrong from their very first experiences at school. High quality relationships are modelled very well by all staff, who maintain a calm and purposeful atmosphere at all times. Children's behaviour is exemplary.
- Children love being in the nursery and they show impressive levels of confidence and independence when choosing their own activities. They show excellent levels of concentration and independence, for example when they investigated different leaf patterns using large magnifying equipment.
- Children settle quickly into nursery life because staff work closely with families to ease separation at the start of sessions. Children who find managing their own behaviour more challenging show great improvements because of the excellent support they receive. Disabled children and those with special educational needs are very well supported through focused, adult-led activities and by their peers who include them in their games.
- Children have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe both indoors and out. They are encouraged to adventure safely, particularly on the large apparatus. Children say they feel safe and understand the need to move around the classroom safely.
- They are very kind and considerate to each other. Any minor unkind action or unwillingness to share is explained and dealt with by staff and children.
- School documentation and discussions with parents show that, for some children, there have been excellent improvements in behaviour over time.

The leadership and management are good

- Key leaders and governors have taken positive action to ensure the school runs smoothly and continues to improve during a period of staffing uncertainty. Their overall management of the children's centre and the early years provision is central to the drive to give children the best possible start. Staff in all provisions work well together to benefit children in the nursery.
- The acting headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by the assistant headteachers. Their roles are clear and they are very purposeful in their pursuit of improvement. Senior leaders and staff have a shared vision and determination to provide the best quality provision and standards of care for their children.

- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and underpinned by senior leaders' regular monitoring and support for improving teaching. They use the findings from their observations to set clear targets for improvement for each member of staff. They provide appropriate training programmes for all staff in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the two sites.
 - Some middle leaders have had a strong impact on improving the consistency of provision across both sites, for example for children with disabilities and special educational needs and through the Forest School. However, as a result of staff changes, some middle leaders are not yet fully sharing their expertise or checking and improving the consistency of high quality provision across the two sites.
 - The well-planned curriculum is relevant to the children's ages and interests and promotes overall good progress. The partnerships with parents and carers are very strong. The school provides courses for parents, including support for those learning to speak English so they can help their children at home.
 - Staff ensure that all safeguarding and welfare requirements fully comply with current legislation, including child protection, discrimination, risk assessments, and day-to-day health and safety monitoring. Until recently, the local authority has provided light touch support for the nursery. It has recently become more involved and gives good support to new senior leaders during the time of uncertainty.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body fully shares the ambitions of senior leaders to make sure the school plays an important part in the community in ensuring equality. It contributes significantly to the everyday life and work of the school and monitoring visits are regular. Governors implement clear performance management procedures with effective links between performance management and pay progression.
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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

Unique reference number	133731
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	402582

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sonya Hinton
Headteacher	Anne Sauer (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2009
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