

# Whitnash Nursery School

Nursery Lane, Whitnash, Leamington Spa, CV31 2PW

**Inspection dates** 8–9 November 2012

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- This is a school which sees the promise in its children. The teaching team plans the learning to give children the maximum possibility to achieve their potential.
- Children's outstanding achievement and rapid progress is secured by the ways staff listen to them and help them to make connections between the different parts of their learning.
- Exemplary leadership from the headteacher, and governors, has enabled the school to continue to grow in strength. It has maintained an outstanding quality of education since 1997.
- The school has a fine reputation in its local community, and has a national and international reputation for excellence.
- Outstanding teaching enables children to develop excellent social skills and independence. Their creative development is well in advance of that expected for their age.
- There is a sensitive emphasis on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This results in their outstanding behaviour and understanding of being safe.
- Staff understand the children so well because their checking and recording of children's progress is focused firmly on detailed day-by-day observations.
- The school's continuous drive for improvement includes refining the ways it teaches letters and sounds (phonics), and increasing further families' involvement in the recording of their children's achievements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector made eight separate observations totalling some four hours. A joint observation was undertaken with the headteacher. Displays and records of children's work were examined.
- All members of the teaching team present during the two days of the inspection were seen working with children. This included the headteacher, the class teacher and various support staff who make up the teaching team. A session of the lunchtime club was also observed. Opportunities were taken throughout the inspection to talk with the children.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of school documents including: development plans; policies; self-evaluation reports; monitoring files; safeguarding and curriculum materials; and information for parents and carers. Governing body documentation was examined, including the headteacher's reports to the governing body, and other reviews of school performance.
- Discussions were held with: the headteacher; the class teacher; teaching assistants; office staff; representatives of the governing body; a representative of the local authority; a senior early years educator; the schools' under-fives specialist (psychotherapist); the manager of the partner children's centre.
- The inspector took account of the five responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and spoke individually with many parents and carers during the course of the inspection.

## Inspection team

Michael Miller, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average nursery school taking children from Whitnash and the surrounding areas of South Leamington. It works in partnership with Whitnash Children's Centre, with which it shares its site.
- The school has places for up to 80 children aged three to four years. From December 2012, the governing body is opening a Nurture Nursery for children aged two to three years.
- Most children only attend the school for the three terms of the Nursery year, but some may join in the January of each year and stay for five terms.
- Children attend six sessions per week; either mornings or afternoons only for four days, and all for one full day.
- There is a daily lunchtime club for children on the school's roll. This is managed by the governing body.
- The large majority of children are of White British heritage. A small minority come from other ethnic backgrounds; very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs, including those supported by early years action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is well below average. Such children's needs involve mainly speech, language and communication difficulties.
- The school is currently a National Early Years Teaching Centre and an Arts Connect Hub School for the West Midlands.
- The headteacher has been in post, and has led the school, for 26 years.

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

- Enhance children's learning and make the teaching of letters and sounds even better by:
  - providing additional opportunities for the teaching team to work with small groups and individual children on letters and sounds (phonics) work
  - providing parents and carers with additional information and guidance to support and encourage them to supplement work on letters and sounds at home.
- Extend the school's excellent partnership with parents and carers by:
  - ensuring the planned introduction of a new 'colour coding' system for documentation and information in children's achievement records is completed fully
  - working with parents and carers to review and assess the impact and helpfulness to them of the new system once it has been trialled fully.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- School data show that, in recent years, children's skills and levels of knowledge on entering the school have been falling. Overall, these are now below those expected for their age. Most children make significant, rapid and sustained progress to reach levels of development above those expected for their age by the time they transfer to the Reception classes in other schools.
- The school's in-depth analysis of its children's learning shows the need to focus more on letters and sounds as this aspect is slightly weaker than the development of other aspects of the children's communication, language and literacy skills. The school is already planning additional opportunities for work with small groups and individual children on letters and sounds. It is also developing additional information and guidance to support and encourage families to supplement work on letters and sounds at home.
- The school's record of outstanding achievement results from the excellent ways it identifies opportunities for children's learning, and then builds activities and experiences around these. There is a powerful approach to helping children to look, listen and share their experiences. This reflects the school's underlying commitment to ensuring equality for all.
- Disabled children, those who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are supported extremely well. They make outstanding progress because of the expert provision and experience of the staff. The strong partnership with the adjoining children's centre ensures continuity of care and provision for such children, and especially for those identified with speech, language and communication difficulties.
- Learning is supported by excellent displays of children's creative work, mark-making and photographs. The value of this stems from a belief that children best make sense of their world through an environment which supports curiosity and self-value. Staff also ensure that fun in learning is a natural, everyday part of the children's lives at school.
- Children achieve so well because they have such wide opportunities to explore and express themselves. They also learn very actively through the excellent sensory experiences planned for them on a daily basis.
- When making clay models of animals, the children were encouraged to explore whether the medium was wet or dry, rough or smooth. In addition, their mathematical development was enhanced by investigating whether lumps were heavier or lighter than each other, and whether one lump would 'balance' on another.
- During one story time, children benefited from the teacher's excellent, traditional, oral story-telling skills when exploring the tale of the 'Gingerbread Man'. Children took responsibility willingly for working finger puppets of the characters and this enhanced their involvement and enjoyment. The subtle emphasis of repeated sounds such as 'run run' and 'fast fox' helped significantly in paving the way for the teaching of letters and sounds.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The headteacher and staff are strong on team-building. Staff are all seen as being as important as each other in the support of children's learning. Consequently, the school is very effective in the ways it plans activities and opportunities for learning in a supportive and enriching

environment.

- Staff think very carefully about how best to encourage children's development and do a great deal to foster their independence in learning. They understand thoroughly the processes of child development. There is an awareness that there is no single rule for every child. This aids significantly the ways members of the teaching team gain insights, through their excellent assessments, into children's approaches to learning. Records of daily observations are very detailed and help considerably in the planning of learning and activities for individual children.
- Discussions with parents and carers show they appreciate and understand the school's approach to teaching and learning. There are, therefore, high levels of respect for the school within its local community. Families appreciate that they are active partners in their children's education.
- The professionalism of the teaching team is shown by the ways they are active co-learners and collaborators with the children. They are successful in this through the ways they are able to question the children and enable them to be able to talk actively about their learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants alike give the children the space to think and respond, then build upon the children's contributions. Staff respond sensitively to children's ideas and interests; they consider the things children talk about are worth knowing about. This has a strong impact on the children's personal, social and emotional development, and their readiness for learning.
- During one session, when looking at a story book, children's conversation opened out on the topic of transport. This was grasped immediately by a teaching assistant and a discussion between children flowed on the technicalities of working with their parents and carers to adjust the height of the saddle on a bicycle. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world was enhanced.
- Children's achievements are shared effectively with families through individual achievement records (learning journeys); these help make children's learning visible for parents and carers. The school is looking to extend this excellent partnership through the introduction of a new 'colour coding' system for the documentation and information it provides on children's learning.
- This approach also identifies the questions parents and carers may ask of their children, how they may encourage contributions from their children, and the features of successful learning. The school is looking to work with families to review and assess how helpful this proves for them once the system has been established and trialled fully over the course of the year.

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

- A well-established programme of home visits, before children start at the school, not only helps staff to get to know the children and their needs, but also helps families to prepare their children well for school. As a result, children settle quickly into school life right from their very first day.
  - Central to the school's approach is the belief that during the early years of development, children become who they are as individuals. Consequently, the teaching team has designed a programme of education based on the principles of respect and responsibility. Children thrive in this environment and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is particularly well developed for their age.
  - Key to the school's approach is ensuring children develop resilience in tackling their learning and
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activities; their involvement is fostered very effectively and this reflects the teaching team's high expectations of both themselves and the children.

- Behaviour and safety are outstanding because children develop self-confidence, trust in the teaching team, are enabled to develop very well both their independence and social skills. Children show high levels of persistence on activities and concentration throughout the sessions they attend.
- Children look out for each other and work together very well. There was very productive cooperation, for example, between those using tools and large building blocks outside to construct a defensive structure to protect each other from aliens. They explained the 'story' of this most imaginatively. When running around the playground, expending energy as superheroes, they also took good care not to bump into and hurt each other.
- Parents, carers and their children are welcomed personally each day by the headteacher. She often provides a valuable 'baby and buggy minding' service as parents and carers go through to the classroom to help settle their children at the start of each session. This enables a most productive start to lessons.
- The excellent community spirit which exists within the school is to be seen at the end of each session when all the children and the teaching team get together for group time. Not only does the singing of traditional and modern rhymes support children's cultural development very well but the actions and rhythms the children learn with them enhance their physical coordination. The sight of the staff and children imitating penguins was a joy to behold.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The monitoring of teaching and learning takes place consistently, and naturally, each day. School records, and the joint lesson observation with the headteacher, show she has an excellent understanding and appreciation of the quality of teaching and learning.
- The headteacher works regularly alongside her colleagues to support individuals and groups of children. She has established a thoughtful and considered approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning; this both trusts and values what each individual member of staff contributes to the school, personally and professionally.
- Systems and processes for safeguarding children, and caring for those whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable, are very secure. Discussions with parents and carers show that the way staff look after their children is seen as a strength of the school.

#### ■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well informed as a result of its regular monitoring of the school, and the information provided by the staff and headteacher, both orally and in more formal, written reports. The governing body checks regularly on the impact of teachers' performance management targets. Such targets are linked directly to the quality of teaching, salary structure and more general school development planning. This approach helps to underpin securely governors' overall outstanding concerning the quality of education the school provides for its children, and how their achievement compares with other nursery schools. The school's finances are managed and monitored efficiently. Governing body records show a good track record of attendance at training courses since the last inspection; this has helped in both their development as a body and their monitoring role.

- Monitoring by the local authority is 'light touch' only as the school is recognised as a centre of excellence. The downsizing of the local authority's advisory services has prevented any regular monitoring for a couple of years. However, partnerships between local groups of schools are encouraged to promote mutual support, help and advice; the school plays an active role in this.
  - Continuous excellence in the school's leadership and management was acknowledged in September 2011 when it became one of the 16 schools recognised by the Department of Education as a National Early Years Teaching Centre. This is part of a two-year project to establish a network of outstanding nursery schools and children's centres across the country.
  - In September 2012, the school played host to 23 visitors from all over the country as part of its contribution to extending national good practice. The comments recorded by these visitors reflect the school's outstanding effectiveness and capacity for improvement: 'So inspirational'; 'A very creative school'; 'Loved the defined areas of learning and use of technology'; 'Fabulous learning environment'; and 'The attention to detail promotes value and respect'.
  - In the entrance to the school, there is a 'comments tree' upon which families can hang labels with observations about the school. The overall high quality of education provided can be summed up by one noting a child's comment, 'Mummy, I'm brilliant at school aren't I!'
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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>	125487
<b>Local authority</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	402332

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>	63
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Helen Davies
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen Howell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 June 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01926 335312
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