

Oxhey Early Years Centre

Eastbury Road, Oxhey, Watford, WD19 4RL

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
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.

- Children achieve exceptionally well and make outstanding progress in all areas of learning. They develop excellent learning habits and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- All groups of children, including those who find learning more difficult or who are at an early stage of learning English, make equally outstanding progress in developing their key skills.
- Teachers provide a wide range of rich and exciting activities for children. They ensure an excellent balance of adult-led learning and opportunities for children to follow their interests. Although eager to praise, at times teachers miss the chance to reinforce what a child has learned when they talk to them.
- Relationships between children are outstanding and their behaviour is excellent. Parents and carers say how happy children are and how safe they feel.
- Attendance is high.
- The school builds excellent links with parents and carers. They speak highly about how well the staff support the whole family and the positive impact this has had on their children.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and she is well supported by a very strong leadership team. The leadership of teaching is particularly effective and the school is always looking to improve.
- The governing body provides excellent challenge and support and ensures that money is spent wisely and effectively.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 sessions and parts of sessions. Some of these were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, members of the governing body, staff, parents, and a representative of the local authority. Informal discussion also took place with children.
- Samples of children's work and their 'learning journey' books were scrutinised.
- Fifteen parents and carers responded to the online Parent View survey. Parental responses to school questionnaires were analysed and they informed inspection judgements.
- Questionnaires from 15 staff were considered.
- The inspector looked at key inspection documents, including performance data produced by the school, procedures for safeguarding, self-evaluation work, reports to the governing body and the school improvement plan.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Oxhey Early Years Centre is an average-sized nursery school. Most children attend for a morning or afternoon session but a number stay all day.
- The school is integrated with the Sunshine Children's Centre and Oxhey Early Years Centre Ltd Daycare. These are inspected and reported on separately.
- A broadly average proportion of pupils are supported through school action.
- An average proportion of pupils are supported through school action plus although none currently has a statement of special educational needs.
- The large majority of the children are White British. However a growing number are from a minority ethnic heritage and are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Broaden and improve the way staff reinforce and strengthen children's learning through the conversations they have with them and the feedback they provide for them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- When children join the Nursery their skills and knowledge in all areas of learning are below those expected for their age. In their communication, language and number skills they are often well below. A growing number of children have poor speech skills when they start or are at an early stage in learning English.
- Over the time they spend in the school, almost all children make outstanding progress and this has been a consistent picture over a number of years. In 2011, almost every child reached the expected levels for their ages and over three-quarters exceeded this. This is outstanding achievement and many children leave with high levels of attainment.
- Boys have levels of attainment when they start that are slightly below those of the girls. However, they make outstanding progress and, on leaving, their achievement is in line with that of the girls. This is due to the staff providing a wide range of activities that stimulate and promote boys' learning.
- Children from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those who find learning difficult and are recognised by the school as needing extra support, also make outstanding progress especially in their personal, social and emotional development. This is due to the excellent support provided by all staff. Recent work to improve the way the staff recognise and deal with aspects of children's overall wellbeing has been very successful in supporting all children's learning and attitudes towards school.
- The recent introduction of home visits has been of great benefit in helping children settle quickly into school and to help staff identify very early any barriers to learning or any vulnerable children who may need extra support.
- Children enjoy looking at books and freely choose a book to look at or share with a friend or an adult. Books have a high profile throughout the setting. Special days provide excellent opportunities for male role models or parents, grandparents and carers to spend time reading with children. Children handle books with care, enjoy being read to and acting out stories with appropriate toys. In one session, for example, children excitedly replayed a story about owls with the accompanying soft toys. In another, early skills in linking sounds and letters were developed through children's initials.
- Counting skills are well developed through a wide range of songs, rhymes, games and activities. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is outstandingly well taught through a range of activities, such as investigating light sources or stories about festivals such as Diwali. This is shown by their high levels of knowledge when you talk to them and ask them about their learning.
- The outdoor spaces are used extensively and this has a very positive impact on children's physical development. In addition, the school ensures plenty of opportunities for water and messy play with mud or sand, providing children with excellent waterproof suits. A good range of wheeled toys is used, for example, to encourage boys' emerging mark-making. They wrote tickets for the 'car wash' after which the toys were carefully cleaned and dried.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because the staff are extremely committed to continuously improving their practice and to doing the best they can for the children in their charge. Because of this the school has not stood still since its last inspection but has improved still further.
- There is an excellent mix of experience among the teachers, nursery nurses and early years practitioners. They work extremely well as a team, planning together and sharing roles very effectively. A major strength of the teaching is evident in the involvement of the adults with the children during activities. They ask excellent, challenging questions that lead children's learning on without over-directing or giving the answer too quickly. Adults raise children's self-esteem through some outstanding use of praise and this becomes evident on many children's faces. However, there are some missed opportunities when talking to children to consolidate and recap on the new learning they have made. For example, when children were writing 'car wash' tickets, staff did not sufficiently emphasise the quality of children's early letter formation.
- There is an excellent balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children worked happily for an extensive length of time with an adult creating circuits to light bulbs or run motors. In-depth and very challenging adult-led questioning helped develop their knowledge and understanding of batteries and how circuits work to a high level. As one boy said when investigating light sources in a dark room, 'Awesome!' At other times, children take the lead as they explore electronic toys that they can control or to work with a wide range of imaginative soft materials and media.
- Planning is based on in-depth and frequent assessments and observations of children's learning. This enables staff to target specific activities very effectively. One higher attaining boy, for example, spent a lengthy period with one teacher creating a book illustrating and telling the story of Diwali. Parents are kept well informed about children's work through excellent 'learning journey' books and through the very useful newsletters which contain excellent information about the activities planned for the children.
- Staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of individual children's needs. Because of this, work can be planned to address any barriers to learning. Two children needing extra support with their speech had an outstanding short well-focused session with an adult, discussing the contents of a book. The amount of enjoyment the staff get from being part of the nursery team is consistently evident in the joy they show during their work with the children and the smiles on their faces. This was also evident in the staff questionnaires where all strongly agreed that they were proud to be a member of staff at this school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour is outstanding because the relationships between adults and children are so strong. This is evident at the start of sessions when children enter calmly and happily, self-register their names and settle very quickly into activities. Children meet each other with pleasure and are clearly very friendly together.
 - The Nursery provides a safe learning environment in which children can explore and get messy but remain safe and secure. Parents agree that their children are very well-cared for and safe at the Nursery. All those spoken to, or who completed questionnaires, were very positive about how much their children enjoyed school and that there was no poor behaviour, bullying or name-calling.
 - Children are happy and confident in school because they know the adults so well and have
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strong relationships. The work to build children's self-esteem and wellbeing is plainly evident in all of the Nursery's work. This includes the lengthy attention span and involvement in activities that many of the children demonstrate and is much higher than that typical of children of this age.

- Snack time is exemplary and other settings have visited the school to learn from its practice. It is very effective in developing children's social skills and is used by staff as an opportunity to talk about a range of social, moral or health related issues. It is from work such as this that children know spontaneously to wash their hands after handling the guinea-pigs, for example.
- The school is especially effective in working with more vulnerable children. This includes support for those who have suffered bereavement in their family or who are going through more temporary difficulties. Staff are very well trained to deal with these issues and this has a positive impact on many of the children's learning.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- A major strength evident throughout the work of the school is the lack of complacency among the senior leaders. Although judged outstanding at the last inspection in 2009, the school has worked very hard to maintain strengths and continue improving and developing in many ways. Leadership is very effectively distributed among staff and this is clear in the ways different adults lead different training events for aspects of the provision.
- The headteacher provides outstanding, determined and well-focused leadership of all aspects of the school including teaching. The continual search for improvement is evident in the latest round of performance management of staff which is including peer mentoring and coaching, and the use of video so that staff can learn from each other's practice. Other objectives for staff have led to better organisation of, for example, the creative areas and resources. Excellent recruitment procedures, which focus on personal qualities in a separate interview as well as professional qualities, are used to ensure the quality of new staff members appointed.
- Since the last inspection, the local authority has provided very effective input to help the school develop its use and understanding of data illustrating how well the children are learning. Further effective support is provided for other training including for new governors.
- From previous work to assess and improve the quality of teaching and learning, the school has organised a variety of professional development and training opportunities for the staff. Recent events have helped staff to plan and assess progress in the newly introduced Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum very effectively. Some staff have sought training in dealing with speech and language difficulties as they recognised the school's growing need for more-than-occasional outside expertise.
- The school provides a very well-planned and excellent range of interesting and exciting learning opportunities. In addition to the school's day-to-day work, visitors include farm animals, police, fire and ambulance staff, and dentists. Children visit the pantomime each year. Many events involve parents and an excellent recent example was the visit by parents to show children Diwali dances. This work helped children's excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All have equal opportunities to take part in any of these special events as well as in the normal daily life of the school.
- There is excellent cooperation between the children's centre, day care provision and the school.

This benefits all children, but especially those who stay all day or who are more vulnerable. Links with a wide range of outside agencies, especially local health workers and social workers are all used by the school to extend and improve how it cares for and supports the children in its care.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and of the data that shows how well it is performing. A number of the governors have expertise in Early Years education and this is used well to hold the school to account. In addition, financial expertise is used appropriately to ensure available money is used effectively. Governors have an excellent understanding of the performance of the headteacher and the arrangements for continually improving the performance of all staff. They are fully aware of how this is linked to staff pay and ensure rigorous procedures are used to evaluate the quality of teaching. They also self-evaluate their own work exceptionally well and produce an action plan to cover the continual improvement of their work. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements including those for 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

Unique reference number	117077
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401644

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	LA Nursery School
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Kronda
Headteacher	Cathy Gunning
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 November 2009
Telephone number	01923 330300
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