

Arlesdene Nursery School

Blindman's Lane, Cheshunt, Waltham Cross, EN8 9DW

Inspection dates

15–16 November 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 achieve well and make good progress in their learning, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Children of all abilities develop confidence because they feel safe in this welcoming and inclusive community. All staff and children relate very well to each other. Children settle quickly and behave exceptionally well. They show strong consideration and respect for each other.
- Staff work very well as a team and teaching is of good quality overall. All adults successfully build good relationships with children. Staff provide a wide range of stimulating activities both indoors and outdoors.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant improvement in tracking children's progress. The school is providing well-tailored support, especially for those children who have additional needs.
- The headteacher is a highly effective leader. She has guided the school very successfully through an unsettled period.
- The headteacher, staff and governors have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve. The school's leadership has had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and raising children's achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A number of children do not reach the higher levels they are capable of.
- Not all staff are skilled enough at asking open-ended questions to help children to work things out for themselves.
- There are not enough opportunities for children to work in small groups to develop their mathematical skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed children’s learning in adult-led and child-initiated activities for a total of five-and-a-half hours. Some of these sessions were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher, teaching staff and the special needs coordinator. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. The inspector spoke informally with children.
- A wide range of documentation was looked at, including school self-evaluation, assessment data from the monitoring of children’s progress, and improvement plans. 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 eight responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the views of several parents and carers who spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- Questionnaires from 22 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. Most children attend on a part-time basis for morning or afternoon sessions with 20 children attending full-day sessions over two-and-a-half days.
- There have been several changes in leadership since the previous inspection. In the last eighteen months a new Chair of the Governing Body and a new headteacher have been appointed.
- The majority of the children are White British. An increasingly wide range of ethnic backgrounds is represented. The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is also increasing but is below average.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs supported through early years action is average. The proportion of pupils supported at early years action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- The school does not receive additional funding provided by the government through the pupil premium because nursery children are not funded in this way.
- The headteacher and the governing body manage the children's centre and the early years provision 'Rocking Horse' both situated on the same site. These are inspected and reported on separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by making sure that all staff:
 - help those children who are most able reach the higher levels in their learning and development through planning more demanding tasks and activities
 - question children in a way that encourages them to think and articulate their thoughts
 - provide more opportunities for children to work in small groups to accelerate their progress in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children joining the nursery enter with levels of attainment below those expected for their age, with particular weaknesses in early literacy and emotional development. Children enjoy lots of opportunities to choose activities for themselves. Good provision in the nursery means that by the time they leave, almost all are close to and some now exceed age-related expectations in all areas.
- High quality care and the flexible approach provided by nursery staff ensure children settle quickly and become used to routines. Children make rapid development in their personal, social and emotional development. They listen well, share and play well together and follow the nursery rules they are taught. They are encouraged to make choices and the well-resourced outdoor environment teaches them to take risks as they build camps together, play in the construction area or set off on an exciting adventure around the paved track.
- The school develops the reading skills of children effectively through systematic teaching of the relationship between letters and sounds. Some are able to sound out letters as they attempt to write their names or label an activity they have been involved in. The children regularly take home the books they choose to share with their parents and carers.
- Most children's early counting skills are secure. They can match numbers of objects to written numbers and learn about size and shape through playing in the water trough and sand tray. Although children make good progress in mathematics overall, more planned sessions with adults to develop the mathematical skills such as problem solving and reasoning are needed to secure rapid progress.
- Effective tracking systems have been introduced and this ensures that appropriate support is provided for children at risk of underachieving, including those with special educational needs who make as much progress as their peers. Although achievement is good overall, few children reach the higher levels they are capable of because some of the activities and tasks do not always extend their learning well enough.
- Active learning outdoors on the wide range of exciting activities supports the good progress children make in their physical and creative development. Riding on wheeled toys, climbing and balancing encourages children to develop good coordination and movement. They show confidence when they handle small equipment such as paintbrushes and scissors.
- All children have good attitudes to learning. Their strong relationships with staff and the effective liaison with parents and carers, enhances the progress they make across the areas of learning, including developing their knowledge and understanding of the world. Children who speak English as an additional language make the same good progress as others because of the well-pitched support targeted to their early language development.

The quality of teaching is good

- Children learn well because the large majority of teaching is consistently good and at times outstanding. The nursery environment is colourful and stimulating. Reading is promoted at every opportunity and the nursery offers an attractive setting in which to enjoy reading for pleasure.
- Staff make good eye-contact with children and consistently encourage the development of good

looking and listening skills. They use visual clues and sign language to help all children, particularly those who have special educational needs or those new to learning English, to remember routines and expectations. This was seen in a well-taught music session of 'Beat Baby' when all children joined together in passing the toy around in time with great pleasure and confidence.

- The warm welcome provided at the start of the day sets the tone for the good relationships and regular use of praise is evident throughout the nursery. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers agree that their children are taught well.
- Practitioners plan together effectively to support the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Tasks and activities are well matched to their need and enable these children to make good progress in line with their peers.
- There is not enough focus on good questioning by practitioners to deepen children's understanding. However, some staff do skilfully lead children's learning through asking open-ended questions that encourage them to think about what they are doing. For example, well focused questioning when the story of Goldilocks was read promoted some children to reflect on issues of what might happen next and the deeper moral issues in the story.
- Adults have a good understanding of how young children learn. Staff have high expectations and plan a range of interesting activities that motivate children to learn. However, activities are sometimes too easy for children. In particular planning in mathematics does not always take into account the different abilities of the children. Not enough opportunities are planned for children to work in small groups to accelerate their progress in mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- This nursery school creates an atmosphere where families are well supported. Children feel safe and their behaviour is exemplary. They concentrate well and are focused on their learning because they find it stimulating and enjoyable. They are even beginning to take pleasure in tidying up at the end of the session.
- Children are highly enthusiastic and very engaged in their play. Children understand how to be kind to one another. Minor incidents when children are not willing to share are dealt with very well by staff who show children what behaviour they expect. There are no recorded incidents of racism or bullying. Children cooperate exceptionally well with adults. They are given the confidence to take risks; for example discussing whether they have the skills to climb up onto the rocking horse, or using materials to make a camp outside.
- Children understand the importance of regularly washing their hands before they enjoy their healthy snacks or make biscuit dough to cook.
- There is an excellent range of resources that can be used for many purposes and which were moved safely and cooperatively by children during the two days of the inspection. These included large wooden blocks that were used for making camps, wheeled toys, and the toy cement mixer and bricks on the outdoor-activity building site.
- Parents, carers and staff appreciate the approachability of the headteacher in and around the school. Parents and carers completely trust the way the school looks after their children and they all say that behaviour is excellent.

- The school strongly promotes an understanding of cultural difference and celebrates the increasing diversity of its community. The particularly strong focus on promoting children's personal, social, health and spiritual development is woven through all aspects of the nursery's work. Consequently, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Children's attendance has improved since the last inspection. The great majority attend nursery regularly unless prevented from doing so by illness.

The leadership and management are good

- Since her appointment in April 2011 and following a sustained period of turbulence for the school, the headteacher has brought a renewed focus on improving the quality of education provided with support from staff and governors. As a result the quality of teaching has improved and children are now effectively developing their skills in all areas of learning.
- The headteacher has ensured there is a consistency of approach from all who work in the nursery. This is matched by high expectations and ambition. As a consequence, the nursery is thriving and numbers on roll are increasing. The school community has confidence in the way the headteacher is developing the quality of provision.
- The school's leaders have a clear vision for continuous school improvement and have a firm understanding of the strengths of the school and those aspects which are in need of development. Accurate self-evaluation underpins whole-school development planning and the actions taken have led to good improvement, demonstrating the nursery's good capacity to improve further.
- All adults have the skills to ensure children achieve well because the headteacher regularly monitors teaching and provides good quality feedback on any areas that can be improved. Well-organised and purposeful performance management ensures that teachers are provided with any training needed to make improvements.
- The actions taken to drive up standards have been backed by effective support from the local authority which provided intensive support whilst there were several changes in leadership. Governors and staff have benefited from some good quality training and regular visits from the school's adviser. The support has been appropriately scaled down since the appointment of the new headteacher as the school's capacity to improve has grown.
- Children's good achievement, often from low starting points, reflects the effective equality of opportunity provided in a school which values all children and does not tolerate any discrimination.
- The newly introduced tracking of progress data is being used well to make sure that no groups are falling behind in their learning. Very close links with a range of outside agencies are used well to make sure that additional support is provided as soon as possible to meet children's needs.
- Good partnerships enhance the well-organised curriculum, which promotes children's progress and enjoyment in all areas of learning. The wide range of stimulating activities is well matched to the interests and needs of all the children, including those who have additional needs. The school has identified the need to plan more demanding tasks and activities to help children reach the higher levels of attainment.

- Parents and carers are closely involved in their children’s education and are kept informed via frequent meetings, newsletters and text messages.

- **The governance of the school:**

- With the support of the local authority, governance has been strengthened and governors have a good understanding of the school’s strengths and areas to develop. They understand the data and how well the school is doing in comparison with other nursery schools. They know about the quality of teaching, the use of performance management and what is being done to recognise and reward good teachers. Pay progression, including promotion, is clearly linked to expected improvements and can be seen in the increasingly effective teaching and learning. Governors manage the performance of the headteacher effectively. Governors have developed their skills through training. There is a good spread of expertise and this, coupled with well-organised committee work, means that the school is effective in relation to finance, safeguarding and site improvement. Members of the governing body provide a strong level of support and challenge to the school. Governors are well informed, are committed to their role, and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the decisions that they take against the progress all children in the school make.

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	117066
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401639

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosemary Bloomfield
Headteacher	Catherine Croft
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2009
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