

Longshaw Nursery School and Children's Centre

Crosby Road, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 3NF

Inspection dates 28–29 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There is not enough good or better teaching to enable all children to achieve well. Staff do not ensure that all activities and learning opportunities are meaningful and interesting for children.
- Some weaknesses in teaching have not been tackled quickly enough by leaders. As a result, not all children make good progress.
- Some staff assessments of children's progress are not led or checked enough by the teacher. Leaders do not focus enough on analysing the achievement of different groups of children.
- Leaders do not have enough links with other schools and early years colleagues to check that their evaluations of the school's performance are accurate.
- Children's behaviour in some activities requires improvement and staff do not always manage behaviour well.
- Recent work by leaders to improve the quality of staff teamwork has not had enough impact on driving improvement forward.

The school has the following strengths

- Parents are very supportive of the school and staff relationships with children.
- Where teaching is good, children make good progress. They learn through a range of activities where staff effectively support and extend what children are saying and doing.
- Safeguarding of children is given a high priority and staff have a good knowledge of how to keep children safe.
- Governors provide good challenge to senior leaders about how well the school is doing.
- Children's learning is promoted well through making models, learning through stories, playing with toy people and animals and being physically active in the outdoor area.
- The new headteacher has identified clearly how to improve the school and has started to make improvements. For example, she has ensured that the school timetable provides children with enough time to learn through play.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning and teaching in three nursery sessions and spoke to children.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents, including school records of the quality of teaching, assessment data, self-evaluation and the school development plans.
- There were no responses available in the online survey (Parent View) at the time of the inspection. However, the inspector did talk to some parents.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is integrated with Longshaw Children's Centre, a phase one children's centre designated in September 2004. There is also an early years setting on site, operating under the name of the children's centre. Neither the children's centre nor the early years setting were part of this inspection. A joint leadership team leads the three organisations as one integrated centre for children and families.
- The school is smaller than the average sized nursery school; it consists of one classroom, staffed by one teacher and four teaching assistants.
- The classroom is shared with some staff and children from the on-site early years setting. These staff work with all children at some times of the day.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a lot of change in school leadership. The acting headteacher is currently on a period of extended leave and since September 2012 a consultant headteacher has led the school, being present for three days each week.
- The proportion of children supported through school action is below average and an average number are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- Most children are White British and a few are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A few children are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.
- The school does not make use of any teaching at places away from the school except through planned trips.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning to raise children's progress and achievement by:
 - increasing the proportion of teaching that is good or better
 - adapting activities so that all learning and teaching opportunities are meaningful and interesting for children
 - ensuring that children are not over-reliant on the teacher or other staff and are given enough opportunities to apply their learning, and solve problems independently
 - ensuring that the teacher contributes to records of all children's learning and progress and checks the quality of staff contributions.
- Improve children's behaviour by:
 - establishing clear, shared expectations across the whole staff team about children's behaviour indoors and outdoors and applying these consistently
 - ensuring that the staff team share responsibility for the behaviour of all children.
- Improve the impact of school leaders by:
 - increasing team building opportunities for staff to develop common approaches to school improvement
 - strengthening the supervision given to staff so that there is more discussion of working together as a team and building good relationships
 - strengthening links with other maintained nursery schools and early years colleagues to check the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and achievement
 - increasing the evaluation of how well different groups of children are achieving and using this more fully to inform improvement planning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter the school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are below those typical for their age. Although in the past, children have achieved well in relation to their starting points, this is currently not the case. The quality of children's learning and progress is too variable.
- In some activities, the pace of learning is not good enough. This is because staff do not focus well enough on using learning opportunities that are relevant to children's interests and well-planned enough to sustain children's involvement.
- When starting at Longshaw, children's skills are best in their curiosity about the environment and their interest in the world about them. Children make good progress when staff build upon these skills by using the outdoor area, model animals and people and trips for learning.
- Achievement in reading and writing is good when staff share books and support children to write their names, using meaningful opportunities to teach children the sounds that letters make. However, not all opportunities are used well by staff.
- The progress of disabled children, children with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups is sometimes not the same as other groups of children. This is because staff do not always assess individual needs effectively and leaders do not evaluate the progress of all groups in enough detail.
- Teachers do not make enough contribution to compiling and ensuring the accuracy of some children's 'learning journeys' and progress records.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because the proportion of good and outstanding teaching is not good enough to make up for the gaps in children's knowledge, skills and understanding and to ensure that, year-on-year, children at the school get a good start to their education.
- Significant changes to staffing have made it difficult to establish a common approach to teaching and to make the improvements required. While the new headteacher has spent some time in the classroom leading teaching, improvements across the staff team have not fully taken place.
- In activities where teaching requires improvement, staff do not have high enough expectations of what children can achieve and activities are not very interesting. As a result, children find these activities unappealing and do not make good progress in their learning.
- At group times, teaching is variable. Some staff move children on too quickly without checking that all children understand what they are learning or what they are to do next. In other groups, staff adapt their teaching carefully to the needs of the group and use every opportunity to ensure that children understand fully.
- In a minority of examples, teaching is good. For example, in an outdoor activity exploring sledging on the icy grass, nearly all the children made good progress. The teaching assistant leading the activity was clear about what children could learn. Children worked extremely cooperatively together, demonstrating good levels of independence. Less-able children were supported well because of the individual attention that they received. The teaching assistant paid close attention to playing with children and helping them to think, for example, about why sledging doesn't work on less icy patches of grass.
- In other good examples, staff use spontaneous opportunities well to extend children's talk during role play and ask them about what they are doing. This indicates that a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been tackled successfully by some staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- All staff take a genuine interest in the children and this is helped by the key worker system

where children have an identifiable adult with whom to build a close relationship. Children say that they like being in their group with their nominated person.

- The school monitors the attendance of children and when anyone is absent for a day staff seek an explanation from parents and carers. However, only a few children have taken up their full entitlement of sessions since the start of term. Punctuality at the nursery sessions is good.
- Children who need to learn about managing their feelings and behaviour are not always set clear expectations by staff about what is acceptable. Staff are not working well as a team to give children the same support and boundaries. This results in behaviour that interrupts the learning of other children and individual children who are not clear about how they can improve. There are no recorded instances of bullying or exclusions.
- Sometimes, the way in which the nursery classroom is organised unintentionally creates opportunities for children to run around. By contrast, at other times, the nursery is calm, with children and staff engrossed in purposeful play together and with children enjoying good opportunities to become deeply involved in their learning.
- Staff encourage children to look after their nursery and tidy up. This works best at the snack table in helping set out food and drink for one another. It is less successful at the end of the nursery session when staff sometimes tidy too much for children or do not give particular individuals enough encouragement to help.
- On those occasions when teaching is weak, learning is not engaging and children become restless and disruptive. For example, when group time is not planned adequately, children do not settle or learn as they should. Children's attitudes are at their best when staff have thought carefully what will engage children and what will encourage them to want to find out more.
- Children say that they feel safe at school and parents and carers are happy that their children are well looked after. Children mix well together and respect differences. Equality and diversity are promoted well, for example, in children's books.
- Children are very interested in visitors. For example, several children chose to speak to the school inspector and ask why he was there and what he was writing about on his clipboard.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, there have significant changes in staffing, including leadership, which have slowed improvement. The governing body has acted effectively to appoint an experienced consultant headteacher to lead the school for much of the current school year.
- The school has benefited from local authority expertise to help improve classroom resources and to start links with some local schools. Given the previous success of the school, support from the local authority has been light touch. This has included limited observation of teaching in order to challenge the school's evaluation of itself. As a result, some self-evaluation has not been wholly accurate.
- The new headteacher has made an accurate and astute evaluation of the priorities for improvement and begun to make changes in the school. The governing body have been kept fully informed of issues that she has identified.
- The new headteacher demonstrates an accurate understanding of what good learning and teaching look like for young children. She is also a good role model for staff in how she speaks to people and shows genuine interest in each individual. However, much remains to be done by leaders, particularly to improve teamwork between all staff and address weaknesses in teaching. As a result, leadership and management require improvement.
- There is some effective leadership of teaching and learning that demonstrates that the school has the necessary capacity for improvement. For example, effective steps have been taken to ensure that staff understand the expectations of the new Early Years Foundation Stage framework by which learning is assessed.
- Activities for children place a good emphasis upon children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development through a variety of visits, visitors and local community links.

- Leaders review school data regularly to check children's progress against the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and share this with staff. However, there is not enough consideration of how different groups of children are achieving. The new headteacher is aware of this issue and that the system for reviewing the accuracy of staff assessments is underdeveloped.
 - Improvement targets for the teacher and teaching assistants are based on whole-school developments and personal needs. Training and support have been given to all staff, and while there is evidence of some impact, the benefit of some training has been limited. For example, as a result of training about talking with children, staff take care to get down to children's physical level to talk to them. However, some staff do not make good use of open-ended questioning to sustain conversation with children.
 - Safeguarding meets requirements and is led well. The training for staff in safeguarding is good. For example, the lead governor for safeguarding recently conducted an audit which has helped staff to keep a high level of awareness about important issues such as e-safety.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body are committed to seeing the school improve. They provide a good level of challenge and question what the school is doing, including about budget issues. The governing body knows that improvement in the school has been weakened by a number of staffing changes. They review safeguarding policies regularly and check that children, staff and buildings are safe and secure. Members of the governing body are well trained in their roles. They know the school well through regular visits and through reports from leaders including data about children's learning and progress. Governors have a good overview of staff targets and arrangements for challenging and rewarding teachers. The Chair of the Governing Body recognises that there are some current weaknesses in teaching and teamwork and is clear about the improvements being led by the new headteacher.
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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	119084
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	401806

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	3-4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sean Rogers
Headteacher	Rosalind Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2009
Telephone number	01254 698832
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