

Offerton Hall Nursery School

Half Moon Lane, Offerton, Stockport, SK2 5LB

Inspection dates

4–5 December 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.

- During their time in the nursery, the children come on in leaps and bounds. From their various starting points, all children make excellent progress.
- The school is led by an inspirational headteacher. Her expertise in early childhood education and high expectations for the children underpin the school's continued success.
- High quality teaching by skilled and caring staff gets the best out of the children and promotes a love of learning.
- The staff are a committed team focused on continuous improvement. They have welcomed the new formal systems to check on children's learning although these have not yet been in use for long.
- The children settle quickly and happily into the routines of the nursery. From the moment they walk through the door they become engrossed in the exciting learning experiences provided.
- The children learn that the adults care for them and value what they say and do. This develops their confidence to speak, play with others and take risks in trying new activities or following their own creative ideas.
- The Forest School provides exceptional opportunities for the children to learn about nature and how to keep safe.
- Strong and supportive links are established with the children's parents who are overwhelmingly happy with the way the school cares for and educates their children.
- Checks and policies are in place to ensure that the children stay safe and that all have the same opportunities to succeed as well as they can.
- Governors provide good support and challenge to the school's leadership but do not document their work so as to judge their effectiveness.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed ten sessions, one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher. The inspector made a number of shorter observations of children learning and playing.
- The inspector had discussions with the headteacher, staff, governor and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector examined a range of school documents, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, how well the children are progressing and how effectively the staff are helping the children to learn.
- The inspector took into account of a recent school survey of parents' views and spoke to some parents as they brought their children into the nursery. There were no responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Margot D'Arcy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized nursery.
- Children between the ages of three and four attend the nursery on a part-time basis. Attendance can be for a block of two and a half days at the beginning or end of the week or for five mornings or afternoons.
- The majority of the children are of White British heritage. A small number of children are from minority ethnic groups and at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of children who have special educational needs is about average. These children are supported at early action plus.
- A small number of children are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A new teacher was appointed in September 2012 for a 12 month period to cover for the teacher who is currently absent establishing early years provision in a school in Malaysia.
- The school shares a site with two other schools and is located in the same building as a Children's Centre. All these provisions operate independently and are subject to separate inspections.
- The school has received the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Eco School Silver award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In its continuous drive to ensure that all children achieve their best and to further enhance the high quality of leadership and management the school should:
 - ensure that the new, sharply-focused systems for enabling senior leaders to make regular checks on how well the staff are helping children to learn, are understood by all staff
 - provide better information about the work governors do and their impact in helping the school to improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- When they begin nursery, the children's skills are generally below those typically expected for their age. Whatever their ability, all achieve exceptionally well. By the time they leave most have developed the skills expected for their age and some are working at levels beyond this.
- Fundamental to the children's rapid development in all areas of learning is the excellent emphasis given to promoting their personal, social and emotional development, language and communication skills and physical development.
- Within the stimulating indoor and outdoor environments learning never stops. Both areas are thoughtfully organised to excite and capture the children's curiosity and natural instinct to learn, and to promote their independence and creativity in art, music and imaginative play.
- A good example was the way the children turned large wooden boxes into a train, giving careful thought to where they should put the windows and doors. The changing location of the train in the nursery was prompted by the children, as they created various role-play situations. The effective intervention of adults in children's play stimulated good language and social skills. The train sparked the development of a railway station, which included timetables, maps, tickets and writing materials to promote children's literacy and mathematical skills and their knowledge of the world.
- The wealth of opportunities outdoors develops children's coordination, confidence and awareness of their bodies. They show exhilaration and increasing confidence as they run up and down the hills, ride and manoeuvre bikes and climb, balance and travel along structures. They realise that it is harder to push and peddle things uphill than downhill. Regular access to the Forest School has ensured that the children have a remarkable appreciation of the natural world.
- Key skills, such as good listening and looking, are constantly reinforced by the staff and underpin children's progress in all areas, including early reading. The children listen avidly to stories, joining in with repetitive parts and recognising rhymes. Early discrimination of sounds develops as the children make music with instruments and other materials, listen to the noises made by the birds and trees and learn the beginning sounds of their names.
- Reading and writing materials are readily available inside and outdoors. The children use these spontaneously and are learning that what is said can be represented by marks. Early writing skills develop very well in many contexts. The children used twigs to make marks and write letter shapes in the sand and mud and on mirrors smeared with shaving foam. They used paper and envelopes to write letters to Father Christmas.
- The children learn to count, recognise numbers and begin to understand the ideas of addition and subtraction, and problem solving through games and songs. They are gaining very good skills in using computers and i-pads.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is never less than good and much is outstanding. The staff are well qualified and use their very secure understanding of how young children learn to promote the best possible progress for all of them. Parents are full of praise for the teaching and value the close relationships that their children develop with their key worker.
- The way that staff quickly identify children's individual capabilities and needs when they begin nursery, and the daily ongoing checks they make about their development, are key to children's rapid progress. The staff use this information very effectively to exploit the learning potential of children's play and all the activities they undertake. Teaching is expertly and uniquely tailored to the needs of every child. Extra help is given to children who find aspects of their learning more difficult. Those who learn quickly are given additionally challenging tasks.
- Staff ensure that children develop a real love of learning. In one session, the children's attention was captivated by their teacher's magic Christmas box. The children's language and thinking

skills were promoted exceptionally well by the descriptive clues their teacher provided to help them guess the various items in the box. Each child's idea was accepted as a 'possibility', promoting their self-esteem and confidence and they were mesmerised as each item was revealed. The climax came as the teacher revealed twinkling fairy lights. The children's appreciation of this session was aptly summed up by one child who shouted, 'That was awesome!'

- In another session, the teacher promoted excellent progress in learning about mathematical shapes and the language of position. The children touched and described different shaped Christmas decorations and hung them at different levels on the tree. During this session a child who was learning to speak English as an additional language was quietly but very effectively supported by another member of staff who ensured that he took a full part in the session and learned key words. This type of inclusion is common in all contexts.
- The school values parents as co-educators and supports them in promoting their children's learning at home. The story sacks containing books, puppets, cassette tapes and games are an excellent example of these links to and from home

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the nursery. They throw themselves wholeheartedly into all the activities and attend regularly. The special relationship that they have with their key worker ensures that they feel safe and secure.
- Children's behaviour is excellent. They are learning to consider each other's needs and feelings and there are very few squabbles. The children take turns in games and understand the need for simple rules so that everyone feels safe and happy. The small number of children who have difficulties in this area receive excellent support to help them control their emotions and behaviour. The children are helped to understand the need to be kind to everyone and there are no incidences of bullying
- The indoor and outdoor learning environments are organised so that children develop concentration and independence. The day is structured so that they feel secure in the routines, but these are flexible enough to allow children who become absorbed in an activity to continue with it.
- Lunchtime is a well-structured social occasion where the children learn good manners and chat around beautifully laid tables decorated with flowers. The adults help those who have hot dinners to serve themselves and gain skills in using knives and forks.
- The children work outside daily in all but extreme weather conditions. They are fully involved in assessing the risk of working outdoors, commenting knowledgeably about how the ground becomes slippery when it is wet, muddy or frosty.
- The daily excursions to the Forest School provide excellent opportunities for developing the children's understanding of how to keep safe. The children fully understand that 'good looking' and 'good listening' are essential. They explain that they must look down to ensure that they do not trip on tree roots and must be aware of bushes at eye-level. They know that they wear gloves to protect them, for example, against thorns on bushes, and that the berries on these are only for the birds to eat.
- The children are very excited at the forthcoming fire that will be lit in the fire pit and the food that they will eat around it. Outstanding teaching in preparation for this occasion is ensuring that the children learn the rules and procedures necessary for this to be a safe activity.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is an inspirational leader. She works continually to improve the school and ensure that the children are given the very best start to their education. Her expertise is

recognised locally and internationally.

- The headteacher led a rigorous recruitment process to appoint a teacher with significant early years expertise. Together they make up the school's leadership team. Although this teacher has only been at the school for a relatively short time she has already made her mark. She has developed innovative ways of planning, based on children's interests, and has further enhanced the school's assessment systems. She has sent cameras home to involve parents in photographing ordinary events in the children's lives. These are then used by the staff to stimulate discussions with the children and to match learning activities to their interests. The teacher provides an outstanding role model for teaching and has quickly earned the respect of staff and parents.
 - The staff share the headteacher's vision of high quality early years provision. They have regular opportunities to discuss practice, develop professionally and gain qualifications. Their expertise and teamwork also allows the school to provide worthwhile training experiences for a wide variety of students and staff of other schools.
 - The headteacher's consistently high profile in the nursery ensures that she is able to check whether her high expectations for children's learning are being met. Her comprehensive knowledge of all the children results in precise and insightful evaluations of how effectively the staff are promoting learning. To this end, more formal systems are being introduced to determine and record with greater precision how well the teaching is promoting children's learning.
 - The curriculum reflects the very best early years provision. Recent government reforms are fully established. The activities in all areas of learning stem from the children's own interests. Staff expertise turns ordinary learning experiences into encounters and events that are magical and memorable.
 - Excellent partnerships exist with other schools and parents. Parents especially value the way the school develops their children's confidence, independence and love of learning. Many expressed their appreciation of how well the school looks after their children and keeps them safe.
 - Although the local authority provides light-touch support for this successful school, visits are regular and the headteacher values the challenging discussions with her adviser. One such related to whether boys and girls showed equal interest in writing. Money was provided for the school to research this idea, the findings of which resulted in better opportunities for the children to develop early writing skills.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors fulfil their responsibilities for keeping children safe and providing them with excellent opportunities to achieve as well as they can. The extent and impact of governors' work in supporting and challenging the school is not well documented, which limits the extent to which they are able to judge their effectiveness in supporting school improvement. However, they are well informed, open to new ideas and confident to challenge these, and established practice, in their drive to continually improve.
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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	106019
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	400817

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	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Damian Hodgkinson
Headteacher	Catherine Larkin
Date of previous school inspection	22 April 2010
Telephone number	0161 4565851
Fax number	0161 4836821
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