

Mill Hill Nursery School

Doxford Park, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR3 2LE

Inspection dates 22–23 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 make good progress in all areas of the curriculum. They are eager to learn and are well prepared for the next stage of education.
- The very few children with a special educational need make outstanding progress because of the extremely carefully tailored provision they receive.
- Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. All adults know the children well and provide thoughtful and interesting experiences to extend their learning.
- Children's behaviour is outstanding. They love coming to nursery and learn together harmoniously. They rapidly develop confidence and independence. They learn to understand about safety and take sensible risks because of careful guidance by all adults.
- The headteacher is highly ambitious and passionate about ensuring young children get the very best they can and her plans are ably supported by the staff team. Under her leadership, staff have become more expert at what they do, and the nursery building has been transformed.
- The curriculum provided for children is excellent and is adapted to meet each child's interests and abilities. The imaginative layout of both indoors and outdoors, along with a rich selection of resources, offers children countless opportunities to explore and learn.
- The curriculum supports children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development exceptionally well by firing their imagination and curiosity.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all of the teaching is consistently outstanding. The next steps to help children learn are not always precise enough and sometimes adults miss opportunities to extend learning.
- Not all children make the same rates of progress in group times, especially those who have just started nursery.
- Governors have begun to gather first-hand information about the school so they can offer more challenge, but this is not regular or systematic.
- Both teachers are recently appointed and their leadership is at an early stage so is not yet having a consistently effective impact on the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a wide range of sessions in the nursery both indoors and outdoors and during morning and afternoon sessions.
- Discussions were held with all members of staff, members of the governing body, the headteacher and deputy headteacher of the primary school, located on the same site, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 10 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View); the school's own consultations with parents, a letter from a parent and spoke to a group of parents informally.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's own data on children's progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents relating to safeguarding, records of children's work and of the curriculum the school offers children. She also took account of a survey completed by staff.

Inspection team

Susan Waugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school serves the immediate area and a much wider area across Sunderland.
- Children join the school the term after their third birthday and nearly all transfer to the primary school located on the same site.
- It is an average sized nursery school.
- Nearly all children are of White British heritage.
- At the time of the inspection three children with special educational needs were supported at early years action plus. There were no disabled children.
- The school provides additional 'wrap-around' care before and after school and over lunchtime.
- Both teachers have been appointed since the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and ensure all teaching is consistently outstanding by:
 - ensuring each child's next steps to develop their learning is precisely targeted
 - always offering challenges to develop children's thinking and problem solving skills further
 - supporting all children to benefit fully and make the same rates of progress in small group sessions.
- Improve the impact of all school leaders by:
 - continuing to develop the roles of teachers as leaders
 - ensuring the governing body regularly and systematically gains first-hand knowledge of the school so that members can offer more rigorous challenge to move the school forward.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start school with skills that are below those typically expected for their age in all areas of the curriculum.
- They make good progress in all areas so that by the time they leave the nursery they have reached levels which are typical for their age. They communicate and listen well both to each other and to adults when working individually and in small groups. They vary their voice and expression when acting out Goldilocks and the Three Bears for example.
- Children settle quickly and become independent and confident. They choose what to do and persevere well with the task they have chosen. They work together sharing ideas for constructing a fire engine or making cakes for a birthday party.
- There are a wide variety of interesting opportunities for children to develop their physical skills which ensures they make good progress. They climb up the tree house, crawl through willow tunnels and carry blocks developing their balance and strength effectively. They develop small physical skills equally well during activities such as using paint brushes, writing the initial sound of their name in shaving foam or eagerly opening a Russian doll to see what is inside.
- Children with special educational needs make excellent progress because the curriculum is particularly well adapted from day to day and sometimes hour to hour to meet their needs.
- Boys and girls now achieve equally because the school has made a concerted effort to ensure that boys' interests are suitably catered for. This is a typical example of how the school promotes equality of opportunity well.
- Children make good progress in their reading skills. As well as becoming familiar with books and well known stories they learn how to link letters and the sounds they make through fun games.
- Mathematical skills are well developed as adults take every opportunity to encourage children to count, measure and recognise shapes.

The quality of teaching is good

- All adults are kind and caring. Children are greeted each day with enthusiasm and a smile. They have extremely good relationships. Children trust adults to play with them and therefore adults are able to develop children's vocabulary, understanding and skills in a natural, unforced way.
- Use of indoors and outdoors is planned carefully to develop children's independence and choice. Every space has a purpose and is thoughtfully arranged to develop children's curiosity and interest. They naturally want to touch, smell and explore. Adults clearly enjoy exploring alongside the children, whilst they help children learn effectively.
- The resources which are available to children are open-ended and can be used for many purposes. This helps children to develop their imagination well, such as when a group of children made 'berry paint' by crushing the berries in a pestle and mortar. Other children made potions with the berries. Adults supported them with the tasks they had initiated themselves and thoughtfully helped to develop their learning.
- Adults skilfully balance joining in with children and standing back to see what is happening. They listen carefully to children and follow their ideas so they are able to develop and adapt them to keep children motivated.
- Questions are used effectively to develop children's understanding and thinking as they play. Occasionally opportunities are missed to extend a challenge to children or offer them a problem to solve.
- Sometimes not all children make equally good progress in small groups because the tasks set are too hard for children who have just joined the nursery.
- Adults keep detailed records of what children have done and think carefully about what to do next to support their learning. However, this is sometimes not precise enough to ensure that children make more rapid progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The welcome and warmth with which every child is greeted each day ensures that they feel safe and confident in nursery. Children who have just started school quickly settle. Each child has a special person who knows them best and takes responsibility of keeping in touch with parents. This adds to the sense of safety and security.
- Children are keen to get on with exploring the interesting tasks and resources which are available each day. Because they are able to follow their own interests they are never bored or reluctant to learn.
- Adults support children to understand how to stay safe exceptionally well. They understand that they must be careful when using equipment which has access to the internet and know that they must concentrate when climbing the steps of the tree house. They use cutlery appropriately and knives with care. They understand the dangers of fire when barbequing food outdoors.
- Behaviour in the nursery is consistently excellent. The atmosphere is one of calm and order and any noise is that generated by the 'buzz' and excitement of learning. There are few disputes and these are resolved quickly and skilfully with the help of adults. Two girls who were playing hide and seek were gently supported to understand why running around the nursery was not appropriate. They were guided to come up with the reason, that they might hurt themselves or others, for themselves.
- The few children who find behaving well a challenge are supported extremely well. The school works hard to understand the reasons for any challenging behaviour and find ways to overcome it quickly.
- Nearly all children attend school regularly because they look forward to being there. They arrive on time and immediately find something interesting to absorb them.
- Parents are extremely positive about the way the nursery supports their child to settle and nurtures them.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a very clear view of how successful the school can be and these high ambitions are fully supported by all staff and the governing body. Since her appointment governors and staff say the school has been transformed. There have been many improvements made to the school including to the building and grounds, to the resources available for the children and to the quality of teaching.
- Leaders, and in particular the headteacher, focus very strongly on improving teaching and learning. Daily informal meetings combined with more formal sessions for checking the performance of adults have been successful in improving the quality of teaching. This is supported by regular, well-chosen and imaginative opportunities for professional development, which have fired the enthusiasm of each member of staff.
- Ensuring a close partnership with parents is a school priority. They are appreciative of the welcome they are given each day and the regular chances to become more informed about how children learn and to join in special family events with their children. Frequent newsletters keep them informed about developments within the nursery and they are consulted about how aspects of nursery life should develop. Regular daily communication is supplemented by more formal sessions to discuss their child's progress.
- The school makes good use of partnerships with other professionals and organisations and this contributes to the excellent curriculum the children experience. Regular work with an artist has enhanced creative and imaginative opportunities for children. One morning, for example, they were presented with an egg yolk sitting on top of blue powder paint. It was left to the children to use this as they wished. They discussed, created stories, painted and explored scientific properties as they did so. Other professionals enhance children's language skills by training school staff.
- Other aspects of the curriculum are equally well catered for and because resources are so open-

ended they are adapted to meet the interests of each child. The curriculum meets social, moral, spiritual and cultural development excellently. For example, the use of light in the nursery offers children the chance to contemplate and think quietly. Children became interested in Diwali which was being celebrated by a member of staff and they enjoyed many different activities to celebrate alongside her.

- Safeguarding is thorough and all requirements are met.
- The local authority provides light touch support for the school. The school makes good use of specialist support available. For example, the teachers are developing their leadership skills with relevant officers from the local authority. These members of staff are already beginning to make a difference to the quality of education the children receive but they have not yet had the time to have a long term impact.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body are committed to ensuring that the school builds on its current strengths and develops further. They have supported the headteacher to develop the school by making available the resources needed to enhance the building and grounds. They carefully check that developments will provide value for money and are affordable. They have appropriate systems to manage the performance of staff and this has ensured that all aspects of the nursery have improved. They are beginning to gather more first-hand evidence of the school and are relying less on the headteacher to provide information, but this is still at an early stage of development, and no systems are in place to ensure that all governors find out about the information that has been gathered.

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	108752
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	405192

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	81
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Callaghan
Headteacher	Denise Kilner
Date of previous school inspection	13 December 2010
Telephone number	0191 5535930
Fax number	0191 5535930
Email address	mill.hill.nursery@schools.sunderland.gov.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

