

Oaklands Nursery School

Oaklands Avenue, Porthill, Newcastle, ST5 0EX

Inspection dates 24–25 January 2013

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.

- All children thrive, and achieve exceptionally well from the time they join the nursery.
- The seamless integration of the private Oaklands Childcare within the nursery ensures that there is always a high ratio of adults to children. This means that children receive lots of individual support and attention. As a result, children feel safe and well-looked after and show exemplary behaviour.
- Practitioners know the children very well as individuals. Their planning is based on a highly-developed understanding of individual children's needs and interests. An impressive curriculum is provided.
- Both indoor- and outdoor-learning areas are highly stimulating. The children are extremely well motivated and keen to learn.
- Teaching is outstanding. Staff love their work and are a highly effective team. They are reflective practitioners who are keen to ensure that their professional skills are constantly fine tuned. New ideas are welcomed and trialled, for example, the increased use of the Forest School for outdoor learning.
- Underpinning the school's success are the dedication and expertise of the headteacher. She is ably supported by senior staff and governors. Governors challenge and support the school well. They have a good understanding of its work, although parents and carers are not always aware of the contribution that governors make.
- Regular evaluations are made of teaching and children's achievement and carefully thought-out actions are taken when needed. This has enabled the school to maintain its high standards.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine sessions, or parts of sessions, totalling some four and a half hours. Three observations were made jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of staff, a parent governor and a representative from the local authority. A session of the lunchtime arrangements was seen and opportunities were taken throughout the inspection to talk with the children.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of school documents including teachers' planning, safeguarding documentation, self-evaluation reports, development plans, monitoring records and records of governors' meetings.
- The inspector took account of the seven responses on Parent View, the online questionnaire, and also held informal discussions with many parents bringing their children to school.
- Responses to the questionnaire from 14 staff were analysed.

Inspection team

Mary Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is of a typical size for a nursery school.
- Children between the ages of three and four attend the nursery on a part time basis. The private provider, Oaklands Childcare, operates within the nursery, and offers extended care. This enables many children to stay all day. There is no off-site provision.
- A children's centre and a playgroup are also located on the same site and share some facilities. These are inspected separately.
- An increase in the number of referrals from health professionals has seen the entry profile to the nursery change since the last inspection. Currently 24% of the children are being given additional support. There are four looked after children. There is one child with a statement of educational needs and the proportion of children supported at Early Years Action and at Early Years Action Plus is broadly average. A small proportion of children speak English as an additional language. Most support is targeted at supporting the increased number of children with speech and language difficulties.
- There are no children for whom the school receives the extra funding known as the pupil premium, since this is given for children from Reception age onwards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the governance of the school further by:
 - ensuring that governors visit the school more regularly when it is in session to enable them to collect more first-hand evidence of the school's work
 - provide parents and carers with more information about the work governors do and their impact in helping the school 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 progress 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. The particularly strong emphasis on language development and excellent modelling by staff ensure that rapid progress is made in the acquisition of new words and vocabulary.
- The promotion of reading and writing skills is highly successful. Children were very keen to make marks in the snow, with many able to draw letter shapes and with some writing their name. Some children wrote down the appointments for the 'vet' at the clinic and were keen to contribute to a group poster to show others how to share their toys. A love of books is developed through regularly sharing books with their key worker, and taking books home.
- Children enjoy counting and can count accurately. They enjoy using a wide range of resources, such as fans, number lines and whiteboards, to match numbers with great accuracy. Children matched shapes and talked about their properties. They were able to explain how a rectangle differs from a square and that a circle 'has one edge that goes all the way around'.
- Children settle quickly at the beginning of each session. They are confident enough to explore, ask questions and keep their concentration. Children listen to adults carefully, are quick to pick up new words. and recall previous work clearly. During a group session in which children were making predictions about ice melting, the use of photographs helped them to recall how the ice had melted previously. This helped them accurately to predict that it would melt quickly if they held it in their hands.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs are quickly identified. Early assessments ensure that staff know which children need extra support and so work can begin immediately on helping them to become successful learners. The use of imaginative resources, such as photographs as prompts, ensure that those children who speak English as an additional language learn quickly. Looked after children feel very secure and trust the adults around them. High quality support enables all these children to make excellent progress.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The highly effective team of teachers, early years practitioners and support workers provide the children with an excellent start to their education. As a result children make outstanding progress in their learning. As one staff member said, 'Children are at the centre of everything. All the staff are committed to providing outstanding provision for them'. This underpins the success of this nursery.
- A major strength of the teaching is the significant amount of time that staff are able to provide for individual children. This enables them to move children's learning on rapidly.
- The staff are very adept in knowing when to step back and give children the space to explore

and learn for themselves, and when to step in and ask questions to move the learning forward. They are also very skilled in giving children lots of opportunities to explain and give reasons for why something has happened. This successfully promotes children's problem solving and critical thinking skills. Before children cooked a range of food on the open fire in the forest, they were encouraged to predict what would happen to the food. Afterwards they were able to describe how the food had changed: 'The marshmallows went all sticky inside and the bread went hard.'

- Underpinning the excitement and fun evident in all that goes on is very astute planning. Planning is responsive to children's own ideas and suggestions and it ensures that every child is given the support he or she needs. An extremely wide range of hands-on activity is evident in every session. Daily discussions amongst the team highlight any concerns, for instance, if a child is falling behind. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have excellent support and are fully included in school life.
- The outdoor area, with its exciting equipment and imaginative layout, ensures that children have every opportunity to develop physical skills. Forest school sessions give children the chance to test their muscles, for example, when moving branches to create an animal shelter and tying knots in ropes in the den. Children were excited to use their animal chart to track prints left in the snow overnight thus widening their understanding of the world.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The school is an outstandingly harmonious, inclusive and safe community. Children play and work together very happily and have excellent attitudes to learning. Parents spoke warmly about the complete faith and trust they had in the nursery.
- The skilful integration of the childcare and nursery staff ensures that the children have lots of adults around with whom to play and work. This makes them feel secure and contributes to their high levels of confidence.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Children respond well to the high expectations of staff, who take every opportunity to remind them of the nursery rules, such as, 'good sitting and good listening'. They show excellent levels of concentration and perseverance.
- Children are eager to come into the nursery and clearly enjoy all the activities they do. Children are respectful, polite and aware of the feelings of others. Children spontaneously went to a distressed child and hugged him. 'We want to make him feel better because he's sad,' said one child.
- The care of the children has the highest priority. Children are safe at all times. The outdoor experiences build in children an advanced sense of safety for their age. The inspection took place following several days of ice and snow. Nevertheless, children moved around the snowy paths with great care. They chopped up the ice, placed food on pointed skewers and cooked over an open fire with a well-developed awareness of safety.
- Tidy-up routines are deeply embedded and all children contribute to helping to tidy up the area in which they have been working. Excellent levels of independence are fostered as children are encouraged to choose their own resources, put on their own wellingtons and fasten their own coats.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is an inspirational leader. The school has not stood still since its last outstanding inspection report. The extended care has grown and been developed, and the headteacher now leads a complex organisation with great skill and care. The headteacher has worked continually to improve the school and ensure the children are given the very best start to their education. Her expertise is recognised within the local area. The local authority use the school as an example of outstanding practice.
- The headteacher is ably assisted by the teacher and bursar, who together make up the school's leadership team. The teacher provides an outstanding role model for teaching and is well respected by the staff. The bursar ensures strong procedures for safeguarding, health and safety, and ensures that financial management is of the highest quality.
- 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 allow the school to provide worthwhile training experiences for a wide range of students.
- The headteacher's consistently high profile in the nursery ensures that she is able to check that her high expectations for children's learning are being met. Her detailed knowledge of all the children results in insightful evaluations of the staff's effectiveness. The checking of teaching and learning is well conducted by the headteacher. The setting of targets for staff to help them improve their performance is rigorous and well planned.
- Staff strongly agree that the school is well-led and managed. The links with the children's centre, play group and childcare on site are all strong. These have a positive effect on children's learning, especially through the support provided for their families, and for those who find learning more difficult. The school's well developed links with its partner primary schools ensure that the smooth transition of children from one phase of their education to another is of particular note.
- An excellent partnership exists with the local authority. Although this successful school requires only light touch support, the headteacher welcomes the discussions and meetings with the advisor. The external support is very effective in offering an objective view of the school's performance and helping with its strategies for improvement.
- The school's partnership with parents is a major strength. Parents are given every opportunity to be actively involved in their children's learning. A 'Literacy Open Day' was held for parents the day before the inspection. Parents spoke about how much they appreciated being able to see how reading and writing are taught, sharing activities with their children and being given lots of ideas to try out at home. They are overwhelmingly positive about the school's effectiveness.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to continuous improvement. They carry out their statutory duties fully. They regularly review the work of the headteacher and staff and link pay to performance. They hold the school to account by considering children's progress data through meetings and sub-committees. Visits in session time are less frequent. This means that they are not always experiencing the nursery's work at first-hand and that parents and carers are sometimes unaware of the value of governors' support.

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	123967
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	402211

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	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Collier
Headteacher	Sara Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2010
Telephone number	01782 297585
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Email address	headteacher@oaklands.staffs.sch.uk

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