

Walton Lane Nursery School and Children's Centre

Walton Lane, Nelson, Lancashire, BB9 8BP

Inspection dates 30–31 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children make good progress and achieve well. Key workers record children's learning carefully and celebrate this with parents and carers. Staff have high expectations of each individual child and family.
- Teaching is usually good and there is some outstanding teaching by teachers and early years practitioners. Good use is made of the excellent indoor and outdoor classrooms to help children think, investigate and explore.
- Staff make consistently clear to children how to act thoughtfully and safely. As a result, children's behaviour is good. The key worker system helps children to feel good about themselves and relate well to their special adult.
- The school is led effectively. The headteacher has a clear vision for providing services for young children and their families. Leaders and members of the governing body work together successfully to ensure good teaching and raise children's achievement.
- Staff learn from one another through good teamwork and have regular access to training and research opportunities. This contributes much to the school's success.
- The needs of children and families are identified and supported effectively through good coordination with the children's centre. This helps to ensure that children are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching. Some staff do not always support children's thinking, play with enough children or join in sensitively without taking over or directing.
- Members of the governing body are sometimes too dependent upon the headteacher when checking the work of the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning and teaching in three nursery sessions and spoke to children. Some teaching was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with two members of the governing body, senior staff and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents, including school records of the quality of teaching, records of teacher targets, data about children's progress, self-evaluation and the school development plans.
- The inspector spoke to some parents and considered the five responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school brings together early years education and care with support for families on one site. The school's headteacher and governing body are responsible for the maintained nursery school, a phase one children's centre (designated in September 2003) and an early years setting, The Rocking Horse Club.
- Neither the children's centre nor the early years setting were part of this inspection. Their reports are available on the Ofsted website.
- The school is an average-sized nursery school.
- The large classroom and outdoor area are shared with some staff and 3-4-year-old children from the on-site early years setting. These staff work with all children at some times of the day. On one day of the inspection up to 44 school children were together with 14 children from the early years setting.
- The proportion of children supported through school action is below average and a below-average number are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- Most children are White British.
- In 2011 the registered number of children grew from 80 to 100 to reflect the increasing demand for child places at the school.
- At the time of the inspection two of the three nursery school teachers were newly qualified teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning further by making sure that all staff:
 - use and encourage open-ended questions
 - model being a thinker
 - model how to describe their own actions
 - use language such as think, know, idea, find out, trying to do
 - play with enough children and do so without taking over and directing.
- Increase opportunities for members of the governing body to check aspects of the school's work independently of the headteacher, including through more visits to see or hear about aspects of the school's work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children enter the school with skills and capabilities that are generally in line with expectations for their age. By the time that they move to primary school they make good progress in all areas of learning and some children make outstanding progress. Much of the reason for this is good teaching and effective recording of children's development and learning.
- Children also make good progress because the school emphasises children feeling good about themselves and learning how to learn. For example, children are encouraged to make choices, find out and talk and share as a group.
- Children who are at risk of not doing well respond positively to the caring and individualised support that the school provides and catch up quickly with their classmates.
- Disabled children and children with special educational needs make good progress because they are included fully in activities and because other children respect differences. Good support from key workers, the special educational needs coordinator and children's centre staff means that small steps in children's learning are planned carefully and recorded and reviewed with parents.
- Parents recognise the positive impact that the school is having, for example, saying, 'My child has benefitted so much from nursery school' and 'My child has been showing me how he is learning to read – it's incredible'.
- When starting at Walton Lane, children have good knowledge, skills and understanding in their physical development. Staff build upon these by observing and listening to children carefully and planning activities that are active and involve a forest-school area as well as many opportunities to run, climb, crawl, throw and cycle in the outdoor play area.
- Whilst at the school, children make good progress in mathematics. This is because staff support children well to use problem solving and counting games and to play with three-dimensional shapes through block play.

The quality of teaching

is good

- All parents who responded to the online questionnaire or spoke to the inspector said that their child is taught well. The inspector found that the quality of teaching overall is good, and although some is outstanding, some teaching requires improvement.
- Teachers and well-trained, skilled early years practitioners form a good staff team who work very well together.
- The impact of the good and better teaching is seen in the overall progress that children make from their starting points and in their enthusiasm for learning. For example, in an activity exploring rubber gloves full of ice an early years practitioner engaged children with her careful, open-ended questioning, her investigating and her modelling of thinking. Such outstanding teaching enabled children to make excellent progress and be totally enthused and helped to think.
- Teaching across the nursery day places a close focus upon talk, stories and rhymes. Staff use attractive books and games effectively to help children understand the sounds that letters make and to promote reading, writing and speaking.
- More-able children are taught well through good planning for specific group work and by staff adapting wider activities to meet their needs. In addition, all children benefit because staff have high expectations of what they can achieve.
- Most staff use resources well to motivate children with the frequent use of information and communication technology (ICT) to help with their learning. Children's skills and confidence are boosted through taking photographs of their own play and activities to include in their records of achievement.

- Where teaching is less successful, staff miss opportunities to describe their own actions or use language about finding out, or they use too few open-ended questions to support and extend children's thinking.
- Although staff often provide children with a good balance of activities that children choose for themselves and those that are led by adults, some staff do not always join in with children's play sensitively. As a result, adults sometimes take over or try to over-direct what children are doing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Throughout the school relationships between children and staff are warm and caring. Adults manage children's behaviour effectively and children from different backgrounds respect one another and mix well. On a few occasions children become restless and lose concentration if they are sat in too large a group on the carpet or if teaching is not very engaging. However, children's behaviour is good overall.
- The classroom is organised very effectively: the children know where toys and resources are kept and the routines in selecting them, getting them out and putting them away. Staff model the safe use of resources well, for example how to use a microwave cooker when making scrambled eggs.
- Children benefit from a key worker system where they have an identifiable adult with whom to build a close relationship. Children relate well to their worker and feel part of their special group at daily group times. As a result, they feel at ease in nursery and show high levels of independence.
- Activities and support for young children and parents are coordinated well between the school and the children's centre. As a result, children are punctual to school, attend regularly and any issues are quickly and effectively followed up.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher leads with clear vision and a firm commitment to improving the lives of local children and families. She has high aspirations for their achievement and is determined that children and parents should feel good about themselves and make as much progress in their development and learning as possible.
- Plans for improvement focus closely upon raising children's achievement and strengthening staff expertise whilst developing the site to provide more services for families. These plans stem from honest self-evaluation of the school and good analysis of data.
- The headteacher and senior staff check the quality of teaching thoroughly. Their observations identify the strengths of teaching and actions for improvement and these are followed up in subsequent observations. A comprehensive programme of training and research opportunities has been established for the senior teacher, newly qualified teachers and early years practitioners. Over the past year this training has led to an improvement in the quality of teaching by the large team of early years practitioners. It has been well received by all staff, who feel more confident about tackling aspects of their performance that should be better.
- The work of all staff is managed well and there are effective supervision sessions to discuss personal progress. Success is rewarded appropriately through levels of pay and good opportunities to take on new responsibilities.
- Children's records are of good quality because the school has tackled the recommendation made at the previous inspection to ensure that records consistently and precisely identify the next steps in children's learning.
- The local authority has an appropriately light-touch approach to this good school and provides specialist support through an associate adviser from another maintained nursery school in the county. The school has improved the quality of checking children's progress as a result of accessing effective local authority support.

- Planning for the areas of learning meets children's needs and their interests. Children have good opportunities to listen to visitors and to go on trips to further their understanding of the different topics they learn about. Activities are planned well to develop children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
 - The quality of safeguarding is excellent and all welfare requirements for children are met, including for child protection and equality. Staff training and development about safeguarding are a model of good practice.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed about the school's performance, the quality of teaching and the priorities for improvement. They know the links between the quality of teaching and children's progress and know about teachers' pay. Members of the governing body manage finances effectively and regularly review safeguarding policies and check that children, staff and buildings are safe and secure. They undertake regular, appropriate training for their role. They ask challenging questions of the headteacher and senior staff and regularly visit the school. However, they are sometimes too dependent upon the headteacher when checking the work of the school.
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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	119079
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	401804

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	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shelagh Derwent
Headteacher	Audrey Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2010
Telephone number	01282 613437
Fax number	01282 699862
Email address	head@waltonlane.lancs.sch.uk

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