

Beechdale Nursery School

Beechdale Road, Consett, County Durham, DH8 6AY

Inspection dates

7 February 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.

- The headteacher's inspirational leadership fires all staff with the enthusiasm and determination to provide the very best for every child to succeed.
- The achievement of all children is outstanding. Regardless of starting points, or any barriers to learning, each child receives the care and support they need to make excellent progress.
- The recent forest school initiative has had a significant impact on the learning of children who took part in the project. The school is rightly extending this across the nursery so that all children benefit from problem-solving activities in a totally natural environment.
- Children who are supported through the additional resource provision are exceptionally well cared for and supported to learn at their own best rate. Staff go to great lengths to ensure that children with communication or physical disabilities have the same learning opportunities as others.
- Outstanding teaching ensures that learning is always interesting, challenging and most important of all, that it is fun. Staff are highly skilled and know exactly when to offer support and when to step back and allow children to find out for themselves.
- Children's behaviour and sense of safety are outstanding. They make the nursery a safe and happy place by following rules and routines well and are eager to help at tidy-up time.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. As a result, the outstanding provision has been maintained over successive inspections for a number of years. The nursery has gone from strength to strength since the previous inspection. It reviews its work rigorously and leaves 'no stone unturned' in its pursuit of excellence. The governing body is very effective and monitors the school well.
- Beechdale Nursery is a very special place, where the joy of learning is shared by children and staff alike.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons or part lessons.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and assistant headteacher, staff, five members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at children's learning journals, progress data, safeguarding information and other documents relating to the school's work.
- Inspectors considered 31 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, as well as a letter from one parent, and 13 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Deborah Wylie	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized nursery.
- The majority of children are White British and only two children speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of children with special educational needs at early years action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average; the proportion at early years action is also above average.
- The school is an outreach centre for children who are disabled or have a special educational need. It supports three children in the nursery and a number of children in other schools.
- The school offers breakfast and lunchtime clubs which extend its provision.
- A new headteacher and assistant headteacher were appointed in September 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The school has already indentified areas for further improvement and is currently addressing these very effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- When children join the nursery their attainment ranges from above what is typically expected for their age to sometimes well below. Generally, it is below that which is typical overall. All children make outstanding progress in their learning and the vast majority reach, and some exceed the expected level in all areas of learning by the time they transfer to primary school.
- Each year a good proportion of children join the nursery with communication and language skills that are well below what is expected for their age. They, and all other children, make excellent gains in speaking, listening, thinking and early mark making because of the relentless focus on these skills whenever staff interact with the children. Staff lead by example in listening to and respecting children's ideas. They speak clearly and simply so that children are able to imitate and learn correct speech patterns.
- Children quickly become confident, independent learners who respond to the tempting array of activities provided for them each session. They eagerly explore and investigate what is on offer and then settle with good concentration to find out things for themselves.
- School data about children's progress show that they consistently make exceptional gains in their personal and social skills, which prepare them very well for the next stage of learning. The data also show that for the children who took part in the early work on developing the forest school activities, their progress accelerated significantly, especially in reasoning and working together to solve problems, which has prompted the school to develop these activities even further.
- Children's listening skills are systematically developed so that they can hear sound patterns and rhymes. This helps them develop early reading skills by first hearing then repeating sounds accurately. As they develop, children learn to recognise letter shapes and link these to some sounds. Each of these skills contributes to children's understanding of the different forms of communication. They sharpen their listening to stories so that they are able to hear and remember the main events and then retell them to each other.
- Children with special educational needs, including those who are supported through the additional resource provision, make exceptional progress and overcome some significant obstacles to their learning. The school has devised highly effective systems for measuring their small steps of progress. Well-trained and vigilant staff are quick to note each tiny gain made by the children so that parents are able to build upon these at home. Staff ensure that all children are aware of these successes so that they, too, can recognise and celebrate their friends' achievements.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because staff have been well trained, shared their ideas and skills freely with each other and are ambitious for every child to do well.
- Excellent teaching is based on very close observation of the children and accurate assessment of their needs. All staff show an excellent understanding of how young children learn, and they are alert to what interests them and excites their curiosity.
- Staff share information about children's progress and interests regularly so that planning for learning is firmly based in what the children need to learn next. This leads to an increase in the challenge in some activities or additional support to help a child overcome some difficulty. This careful attention to each step is what drives the outstanding progress that children make.
- Teachers ensure that children continually find success so that they gain in confidence and are always willing to tackle new challenges. They fully understand that children need to lead their learning and are skilled at knowing when to offer help and become involved and when to step back and allow children to discover for themselves. For example, adults playing alongside children who were digging in the sand for pirate treasure skilfully developed their counting skills by challenging them to count on one more.

- Direct teaching in small group, short sessions is highly effective in developing children's knowledge of number and sounds. In several examples seen during the inspection, children learned at a rapid rate because the teacher knew their needs so well. This meant that the explanations, questions and activities were all pitched at just the right level for every child to enjoy success.
- Staff who are trained to care for children with specific needs provide exceptional levels of care to help the children make the same excellent progress as others in the nursery. Such care enables the children to confidently respond to encouragement and take small but important steps in their development. Staff form excellent relationships with the families of children who have complex needs, which further supports the outstanding progress the children make.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children develop excellent attitudes to learning. They enter the nursery at the start of each session eager to explore the excellent range of activities and 'let the magic begin'. They are active learners who relish finding out things for themselves, and many delight in sharing their learning with adults and other children.
- Behaviour is outstanding because children are carefully taught to follow the rules and routines that help the nursery to run smoothly. They know what is expected when they change activities and are always ready to move promptly, for example, into their key worker groups. School records show that minor incidents of misbehaviour are rare.
- Children happily work alongside each other and sometimes play together, sharing resources and taking turns as they have been taught to do by adults. For example, a large group thoroughly enjoyed digging for pirate treasure, excitedly showing each other the 'jewels' they found!
- Children's confidence to explore this 'magical world of learning' is based on their strong feelings of safety and security within the nursery environment. They have complete trust in adults to look after them and keep them safe. Parents unanimously agree that their children are safe in the nursery.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's drive and determination to continually improve the school are very well supported by all staff. Senior leaders monitor the work of the nursery very well and are constantly looking for ways to improve what is available for the children.
- Senior leaders and governors are clear about the school's strengths and where there are opportunities for further development. Any relative weaknesses are tackled quickly and effectively. The refining of assessment processes to capture the small gains made by children with special educational needs is a good example of how the school is prepared to challenge its existing effective systems to make them even better.
- The management of staff performance is very well monitored and findings used to identify where further training is needed. Excellent leadership of teaching has ensured that this continues to improve from already high levels. All staff are held to account for children's progress, and as their questionnaires confirm they all feel highly valued and morale is high.
- Strong teamwork enables good information about children's learning to be shared continually, so that all are aware of the needs and interests of children. Any child who needs extra help is quickly identified and staff specialist expertise is pooled to find ways of helping a child to overcome obstacles to their learning.
- All children have excellent equal opportunities to succeed. Those with special educational needs, including children who are supported by the additional resource provision, benefit from detailed planning to meet their individual needs and from the support of highly skilled, dedicated staff.
- The outstanding curriculum is constantly developing to provide new interests and challenges for children. The very successful forest school initiative, led by the assistant headteacher, is now poised to extend across the whole nursery, so that all children benefit from developing problem-

solving skills in a creative and engaging way.

- The local authority provides light touch monitoring for the school. It recognises the school has much to offer other schools and encourages other staff to visit to learn from its outstanding practice.
- All safeguarding requirements are met. Staff are very well trained to have an excellent awareness of risk assessment and child protection issues.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One parent wrote to inspectors: 'Beechdale Nursery is a magical place; my child is excited to practise the things he has learnt at nursery. We have treasure maps all over the house!'

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching, the management of staff performance and how teachers are rewarded. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses, and how rigorously these are tackled. They have a good understanding of how well the school is doing and of how popular it is in the community. Finances are well managed and governors ensure that regular health and safety checks keep children and adults safe on site.

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	113985
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	401398

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	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	A Watson
Headteacher	Julia Graham
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2010
Telephone number	01207 505752
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	beechdale@durhamlearning.net

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