

# Blagrove Nursery School and Children's Centre

Recreation Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4UA

**Inspection dates** 12–13 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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

- Children make extremely good progress across all areas of learning. They do particularly well in learning to get along with other children and adults. They rapidly gain early reading, writing and number skills.
- Adults develop warm relationships with children and highly skilled teaching means that children develop a real thirst for learning. All staff use questions very thoughtfully to capture children's imagination, extend their understanding and deepen their thinking.
- Children enter the school happily every day. They remain fully engaged throughout each session because the activities are hugely enjoyable and challenging.
- Children's behaviour is outstanding. Children play and learn alongside one another exceedingly well. They are full of their own ideas and eager to try new things.
- Parents are entirely confident that their children feel safe. Parents work in close partnership with staff to support their children's learning. They are very pleased with how the Nursery helps their children to learn new things. One parent summed up their thoughts when she said, 'This is a magical place for young children.'
- The school's success owes much to the headteacher's unswerving determination to see that all children do as well as they can. Together with the highly skilled and energetic senior teacher, she successfully drives improvements. Under her inspirational leadership, the Nursery has made headway on a number fronts since the last inspection.
- School leaders and governors work extremely well as a team and make sure that the quality of teaching and children's progress are as good as they can be.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 19 lessons where children were being taught in small groups, for example during morning registration, and when children were learning letter sounds or practising counting. The inspector also observed children as they played indoors and outside. Around half of all observations were with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the senior teacher, and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspector also had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of documents, including the school's own information on children's progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding arrangements and children's profiles.
- The inspector took account of the 18 responses to the on-line survey (Parent View), and a sample of parents' written comments made just before their children left the school. He also spoke to parents during the inspection. Questionnaires were considered from 11 staff members.

## Inspection team

Rob Crompton, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Nursery is part of a Sure Start children's centre. The centre's offices are based at the school and the headteacher manages both the school and the children's centre. A range of children's services are provided by the centre, which is inspected separately.
- The school is about the size of the average nursery school. Children are based in three 'key person' groups of up to 15 children. Most attend mornings or afternoons. About a third attends for either the first or second half of each week.
- No children are eligible for the pupil premium funding because schools only receive this additional money for older pupils.
- A small proportion of children has disabilities or special educational needs. All these children have communication, speech and language difficulties.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision off site.
- Two thirds of children are White British. Others are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A few of these children are at a very early stage of learning English.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine the analysis of assessment information by:
  - evaluating the school's new approach to recording children's progress within the revised Nursery curriculum
  - linking with the local authority to test out the electronic tracking system, that has been recently introduced, to compare the progress of different groups of children with those in other settings.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- As children enter the Nursery, their social development, communication skills and early numeracy skills are broadly as expected for their age. They make rapid progress due to the high quality teaching and are extremely well prepared for starting Reception.
- Children soon learn daily routines and very quickly gain confidence in mixing with other children and the adults. Children's speaking skills generally move on at a swift pace because the staff take every opportunity to engage them in conversation and promote their vocabulary. 'When's my next appointment at the vet's?' asked an adult. 'It's on Wednesday at 10 o'clock,' was the prompt and confident reply.
- Due to highly effective teaching, children whose speech was not as developed as expected when they started at the Nursery catch up swiftly. Most leave with speaking skills that are similar to those of other children.
- Through systematic teaching, children make excellent progress in recognising letters and linking them with the sounds they make. For example, during one lesson, children quickly learned how to use their knowledge of the sounds 's', 'a', 't', 'n', 'i' and 'p' to say aloud words such as 'tap' and 'pin'. Later, among their many proud comments were, 'Penguin starts with 'p',' and, 'Orange starts with 'o'.' Such activities give children the confidence to try writing things down, starting with the correct initial letter. By the end of their Nursery year, many children can write simple three letter words.
- From early counting activities, children speedily move on to see how 'counting on' can help them to do simple addition. For example, children were keen to show how they had found the three 'fish' they were counting into their nets, together with another four meant they had seven altogether. A wide range of activities, including building with blocks, making animal dens from sticks, and working with water and sand, helps them gain a really good grounding in using everyday language to talk about size, weight, capacity and position.
- When working indoors and outside, children show how well they are learning to handle things carefully and weigh up risks for themselves. At first very hesitant, for example, a girl stepped up, along and down from some climbing apparatus, trying repeatedly until she could do this without holding on to an adult. Children's imaginative collages made from paper, straws, beads, and glittery materials, all stuck together with liberal amounts of glue and masking tape, illustrate not only their growing dexterity but also their independent thinking and creative flair.
- The school's records show that previous gaps between the progress of children at a very early stage of learning English and the other children have been almost entirely closed. Similarly, the progress of children with disabilities or special educational needs closely matches that of their peers.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- At every turn, adults can be seen promoting children's learning. They use their extensive knowledge of the Nursery curriculum and their secure understanding of how young children learn to great effect. Children respond eagerly to the wide range of stimulating and challenging activities on offer in the extremely well-organised indoor and outdoor areas.
- Adults take every opportunity to engage children in conversations and play alongside them. They provide a wealth of activities that engage and challenge children. During one 'free flow' session, when they had chosen what to do, all children were entirely absorbed. Some were 'at the vet's' playing, with excellent adult support. A group used clipboards to 'write shopping lists', whilst others constructed animal shelters. Adults struck an excellent balance between intervening with probing questions to deepen children's thinking, and standing back to allow the children to follow their own interests.
- Staff are adept at gauging where children are, identifying their next steps and providing

excellent support. Examples of the impact of this expertise are plentiful. For example, an Early Years Practitioner was working with children at a very early stage of learning English. Each child had a book of photographs of themselves taken during their recent activities. Quickly capturing their interest, she skilfully drew out their existing vocabulary and introduced position words such as 'on', 'above' and 'behind'.

- Children who need extra support and those who thrive on extra challenge are equally well supported. During one mathematics lesson, for example, one member of staff took the more confident children, who quickly learned to add numbers such as 10 and five. At the same time, another group benefited from the teacher's clear demonstrations and practical tasks when learning to add one and two to small numbers.
- Staff are exceedingly skilled at building children's self-esteem, including those who need extra assistance. This means that the children confidently explore things for themselves, follow their own interests and extend their learning by working with a rich variety of equipment. Staff develop the children's knowledge and skills so that the children look for several different ways to tackle a setback. For instance, children learned to pour water more carefully through a funnel as they filled a large container.
- All staff work together effectively to provide an extremely exciting range of experiences for children that enhance their understanding of the world outside their immediate experience and of different cultural traditions. For instance, photographs show that last year children made up dragon dances, created Rangoli patterns, counted diva lamps and wrapped Christmas presents.
- Staff check children's progress and make notes about what they are able to do. They keep detailed records and chart progress in individual folders. These provide a comprehensive picture of each child's achievements during their time in the Nursery.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Children eagerly start activities within seconds of their arrival. They are extremely clear about everyday routines. They very thoughtfully wait their turn and share equipment. They become very independent because they have free access to an exciting range of tools and materials, and staff expect children to do things for themselves.
- Children learn to persevere when activities are hard because staff encourage them to stick at it, motivating them through positive comments, prompts about how to proceed and small rewards. For example, one boy kept going when matching letters to sounds as he was eager to complete a tower and shoot it down with a toy cannon.
- Children learn to take small risks and decide how to keep themselves safe. For example, as they were introduced to Simon, a bearded dragon, they weighed up for themselves whether they were confident to stroke its back, and eventually even those apprehensive at first gave it a try.
- Staff handle the very occasional behavioural incidents exceptionally sensitively, and work diligently with children and their families when these very unusual events happen. This means that the children understand swiftly why certain behaviours are not acceptable. Staff are exceedingly skilled at supervising children. They adopt a low key, but effective, approach, helping children to make the most sensible choices.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- All staff say that they are proud to work at the Nursery. Among their comments were, 'I feel extremely happy working here, there is a strong team spirit, and supportive and respectful leadership.' 'I feel supported and valued; we have a fantastic team.'
- Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, staff are constantly looking for ways to improve, and use extremely successful methods for deciding what works well and what is less useful.

- Staff collect and make use of the many ideas they have gained from training courses. Indeed, they are increasingly at the forefront of initiatives. For example, staff are exploring how a 'mosaic' approach – including photographs, verbatim accounts of what children say, and information from parents – might help to gather children's views about school.
  - A useful system of judging how well children are doing against what is expected for their age has been developed, taking into account recent changes to government guidelines. As no national information is available, school leaders are seeking ways to compare the progress of different groups of pupils, such as those who do not speak English at home, with those in different settings. Staff have begun to work with the local authority in developing an electronic system to support this work.
  - Staff have an enormous commitment to the care and welfare of children and are totally dedicated to fostering good relations, ensuring equal opportunities and eradicating discrimination. They work very efficiently with the children's centre staff and other professionals.
  - The local authority keeps in regular contact with school leaders but regards the school as needing only light touch support because of its high quality.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Governors are extremely active in supporting the school and checking all is well. During governors' meetings and their regular fact-finding visits, they ask searching questions about the quality of teaching and children's progress. At a recent meeting, for example, one asked, 'What has led to the gap narrowing between the progress of children with English as an additional language and the other children?' Another asked, 'How do you check this?' During their annual review, governors seek assurance that the salaries staff receive are in line with their responsibilities and effectiveness.
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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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109749
<b>Local authority</b>	Reading
<b>Inspection number</b>	401073

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	80
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rachel Kershaw
<b>Headteacher</b>	Vivienne Simpson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29–30 June 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0118 9375427
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