

Slade Nursery School

Titup Hall Drive, Headington, Oxford, OX3 8QQ

Inspection dates 20–21 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Inspirational leadership by the headteacher has built a team of staff and leaders constantly striving to improve teaching and children's achievement. They have very successfully managed the move to their new school. Some aspects of the outdoor learning environment have yet to be completed and the school is working to make sure it continues to provide an excellent education as the building progresses.
- An exceptionally warm, caring, safe atmosphere is provided by staff that results in children forming close trusting relationships with adults. Children in the Nursery and Day Nursery really love learning and behaviour is excellent because children learn to consider and respect others.
- The school gives high priority to the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children are extremely thoughtful towards each other, valuing and celebrating each other's differences. This helps to make the school very safe and welcoming.
- Children achieve extremely well and make rapid gains in all aspects of their development. Information about children's skills and understanding are used particularly well to make sure that every individual's learning needs are met and all children from all backgrounds fulfil their potential.
- Teaching is outstanding. Staff plan exciting, challenging experiences that reflect children's interests extremely well. Children are terrifically keen to talk about what they are doing. Staff are highly skilled at moving children's learning on through extremely effective questioning and discussion as they play.
- Children with disabilities and/or special educational needs as well as those at the early stages of learning English make the same outstanding progress as their peers as a result of the excellent support they receive.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector made over 15 observations of children working both independently and on adult-led activities, observing teachers, early years practitioners and other staff. She was accompanied by the headteacher or assistant headteacher for over three quarters of these.
- Meetings were held with staff, school leaders, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of previous parental surveys and talked to parents and carers informally during the inspection. She was unable to analyse responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as too few responses were received. Questionnaires from 16 staff and leaders were also considered.
- She observed the school's work and looked at the the children's portfolios and school's documentation: policies, including those relating to safeguarding, information on children's progress, and the school's development planning.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Marshall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized nursery school.
- The Nursery, Day Nursery and Children’s Centre provide a range of services for children, families and the local community.
- The facilities include the nursery for three to five year olds as well as a day care and nursery facility for children from birth to five years and a children’s centre.
- The majority of children are from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages. Approximately half of the children speak English as an additional language, with 21 different home languages spoken. When they join the nursery, almost all are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs, supported at early years action, is above average.
- The proportion supported through early years action plus or with a statement of special needs is above average.
- No children are entitled to the pupil premium (additional government funding), because of their age. However, an above-average proportion of children are known to be eligible for free school meals or are children in local authority care.
- The school has recently moved into a new building. It shares the site with Wood Farm Primary School. The final phase of the building project has yet to be finished.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure the next phases of the building project are managed effectively so that children's achievement is maintained and further enhanced.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children show considerable enjoyment in learning. They challenge themselves to try new things, knowing that adults will always be there to help and they increasingly act independently. They work really well together, take responsibility for their own learning and develop independence; these are key factors in their extremely positive attitudes towards learning.
- Although children have a wide range of skills and knowledge on entry, their starting points are typically well below those usually found nationally. Children in both the Nursery and the Day Nursery achieve extremely well, in their personal, social and emotional development as well as academically.
- Children's achievement demonstrates the substantial gains they make in narrowing the gap between their attainment and that of other children nationally. Irrespective of their starting points, all children, including groups such as those who may be eligible for free school meals, make outstanding progress in all areas of learning. Consequently, some achieve age-related expectations by the time they leave, and a larger-than-average proportion exceed expected levels of progress.
- Because of the strong focus on developing their speaking and listening skills, children make excellent gains in their literacy skills. As a result, children, including those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language, children who are disabled and those with special educational needs, all make outstanding gains in literacy.
- Leaders used information on children's progress to identify that children's mathematical skills had previously been a weaker area of understanding. Following a highly successful focus on promoting numeracy in all areas of learning, children made particularly good gains in their mathematical skills last year.
- Children are really keen to share books with each other. Stories, books and reading are all promoted extremely well by adults. A performance by a theatre group of The Gingerbread Man during the inspection engrossed children as they watched. They retold and re-enacted the story as they played and cooked their own gingerbread biscuits.
- The skills of linking sounds and letters (phonics) are quickly developed and children use these to recognise and write their own names. While all enjoy a wide range of mark-making activities, some are beginning to use their phonic skills to attempt to spell unknown words. For example, on a card she had made and decorated, one wrote the key sounds 'h' 'p' 'b' 'd' 'y' from 'happy birthday'.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Adults have an excellent understanding of how young children learn. They plan very varied, well-resourced experiences which keep children interested, providing encouragement or posing open questions that stretch the learning even further and get children thinking more deeply.
- Children's learning is moved forward extremely well as adults actively play alongside children to model activities and engage their interest. For example, one adult very effectively developed children's physical skills as they discussed how to play musical statues. The children agreed it was important to be 'really still' and that this was 'really tricky'. The adult encouraged them to think how they could stay still for longer and improve their chances of winning. When one demonstrated that using her arms would help her balance, the group copied, agreeing that this 'helped lots'.
- Children are really keen to explore and investigate all that is on offer. They respond with remarkable concentration and perseverance to tasks that are extremely well matched to their abilities. Every part of the building is used imaginatively to provide new experiences, giving outstanding learning opportunities. Outdoors continues to be developed during the next stages of the building project. Staff are conscious of the need to ensure that children do not miss out as

a result of the reduced outdoor space.

- Adults use every chance to extend children's speaking, including snack times, which provide an excellent opportunity to develop children's independence and social skills. Children happily discuss what they are eating and are encouraged to think about healthy choices.
- Checks on children's progress are extremely thorough, constantly carried out and regularly summarised in children's profiles. Staff use information they gather on progress exceptionally well to inform long-term planning, as well as to plan activities and experiences for the next day. This allows staff to build on children's own interests and abilities to maximise learning opportunities. For example, a teacher very successfully introduced the concept of relative sizes when chatting about dinosaurs with one boy. 'Wow! Look at the size of that one!' he exclaimed as they compared the models with those in the book they were sharing.
- Key workers build up an extremely close relationship with children and their families. They regularly share details about children's progress as well as being there to support when needed. Parents of disabled children and those with special educational needs are full of praise for the efforts of the staff. This success is because staff are acutely aware of each individual's learning and personal development priorities and they tailor focused sessions and experiences extremely effectively in response to these.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children's behaviour is exemplary, when working with an adult or playing independently. They show considerable support for one another, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity. Staff deal promptly with instances of unwanted or unkind behaviour, teaching children how to empathise with others and to resolve conflicts amicably.
- Children get exceptional help to advance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Their personal development is excellent. This is demonstrated well through their readiness to be involved in looking after the school building, as well as caring for their learning environment as they tidy up daily. These help to make the school very welcoming and extremely safe.
- Children's understanding of how to stay safe is excellent. Children know they can experiment with new activities because adults are there to help if they need them. One group built a structure using milk crates. Children independently checked to make sure the crates were level and did not wobble before walking on them, offering to hold the hands of those in the group who were less confident as they crossed. Not only were they aware of their own safety but they also readily took care of younger children.
- Strong links with families, supported through home visits, mean that children develop very trusting relationships with staff. In addition, parents respond positively to the school's drive to ensure that children attend regularly and arrive punctually. Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are safe and really enjoy coming to school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, with her extremely deep knowledge of early years practice and how children learn and develop, provides the relentless drive and very clear vision of how the school can constantly develop and improve. Along with other leaders, she uses information about children's achievement particularly well to identify areas across the range of learning opportunities that might be further developed and take action swiftly. They are determined to make sure that this continues as the building project is completed over the coming year.
- The exceedingly successful approach of providing children with enriching experiences that develop all areas of learning is highly valued by children and parents alike. All staff, in both the Day Nursery and the Nursery, play their part in delivering this rich, stimulating and engaging

range of learning opportunities.

- Supported exceptionally well by the assistant headteacher and Day Nursery manager, the headteacher has fostered a tremendously positive team atmosphere. Staff willingly take on leadership responsibilities, running planning meetings and developing children's profiles. Consequently, school leaders are able to consistently focus on improving the quality of teaching. The process of setting targets for teachers to improve their performance is rigorous, and provision for the training of all staff is excellent.
 - The local authority provides the school with valuable support. It monitored the school's effectiveness during the early stages of the building project and continues to work closely with leaders to narrow the gap in children's achievement compared with that of their peers nationally. This helps to ensure there is equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils and there is no discrimination.
 - The school has very strong links with other schools, for example as part of the 'aspiration network', which enable leaders to challenge one another to improve, to learn from others and to disseminate best practice. Leaders and staff work extremely closely with a wide range of services and professionals to ensure that children's learning needs can be met, both within and beyond school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are fully involved in checking for themselves the progress the school makes towards achieving its priorities for development. Regular training opportunities keep them up to date with current practice and thinking. Both mean they can provide very good challenge, holding the headteacher to account extremely effectively for how well the school is doing. They check rigorously that promotion and pay are related closely to teachers' effectiveness in ensuring children's academic progress and personal development. Their understanding of the strengths and weakness in teaching is excellent. They are very clear how the management of staff performance is being used to develop teaching further and improve the outcomes for children. Safeguarding checks are rigorous and requirements are met. Consequently, even whilst building work continues, the Nursery and Day Nursery are safe places to work and learn. Governors are clear about the use of funding to support particular groups of children. They know what the money is spent on, and how effective it is in ensuring the impressive progress of the children involved.
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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	122970
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	402122

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ailsa Granne
Headteacher	Sue Vermes
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 April 2010
Telephone number	01865 750670
Fax number	01865 308570
Email address	office.1011@slade-nurs.oxon.sch.uk

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