

# Ashgate Nursery School

18 Stepping Lane, Derby, DE1 1GJ

## Inspection dates

26–27 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Children make good progress in most areas of learning from often low starting points.
- Progress in physical development is exceptionally good. The school recognised this as a weaker area when children start school, and has devised some excellent activities to improve it.
- All groups of children make equally good progress in developing their key skills. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs often make outstanding progress in their first term at school.
- Children's behaviour is excellent and they develop very positive attitudes towards learning. This helps to ensure that they are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership, based on a clear vision and supported by a very strong staff team that has been created since the last inspection. All staff focus on continually seeking new ideas and good practice for the benefit of the children.
- The governors make good use of their expertise in early years education to support and challenge the school so it keeps on improving.
- The school has good links with parents and carers at the start and end of each session. They say how happy their children are, how well looked after they are, and how safe they feel.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in mathematics is improving, but standards are not yet as high as in other areas of learning.
- Despite their good progress, not enough children reach the highest levels in their learning by the time they leave the school.
- Staff sometimes miss opportunities when they talk with children to extend their thinking and understanding to a higher level.
- Parents and carers do not get enough chance to learn how to help their children at home, or to share with staff more information about what is learned at home.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 sessions and parts of sessions. Some of these were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings and discussions took place with the headteacher, governors, staff, parents, and a representative of the local authority. Informal discussions also took place with children.
- Samples of children’s work and their ‘Learning Journey’ books were scrutinised. Some children read books with the inspector.
- Inspectors analysed and took account of the school’s past surveys of parental views, as well as the 11 responses to the online survey (Parent View).
- In addition, seven staff questionnaires were considered.
- The inspector looked at key inspection documents, including performance data produced by the school, procedures for safeguarding, self-evaluation work, reports to the governing body and the school improvement plan.

## Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Ashgate is a smaller-than-average-sized nursery school. Most children attend for a morning or afternoon session on a part-time basis.
- A below-average proportion of children are supported through early years action, but an above-average proportion through early years action plus. None currently have a statement of special educational needs.
- The large majority of the children are White British. A growing number are starting school at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.
- All children are educated on site. A small number of children have full day care provided by a children's centre that shares the school site. This was not included in the inspection.

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

- Make more teaching outstanding, so that more children reach higher levels by the time they transfer to primary school, by:
  - taking every opportunity in conversations with children to challenge and extend their thinking, knowledge and understanding
  - building on the recent improvements to the way mathematical skills are taught
  - promoting more ways for parents to support their children's learning at home and share the results with staff.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Many children join the nursery with skills and knowledge that are below the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning. A small number are disabled or have special educational needs, and a growing number are at an early stage of learning English. Currently, children speak nine different first languages.
- Children make good progress during the time they spend at the school. This has improved since the last inspection, and the number of children making better than expected progress is improving every year. Progress in number and calculation has been a weaker area recently. The school recognised this and has worked hard to improve the teaching of mathematical development. It has set challenging targets for higher standards.
- Improvements to reading are based on a growing profile of the teaching of sounds and letters, especially through children's initials. Good achievement is particularly notable in the way boys are willing to read and talk about books, with an adult or alone. All children enjoy listening to stories, which they do with attention and interest. Good progress is made in writing because the staff provide a good range of activities to encourage this, as evident when one was child copying their name very accurately.
- The school is very effective at improving children's physical skills. A lot of work goes into how they can use their hands and fingers to manipulate small tools and to help their writing skills. In addition, they have much improved opportunities to climb, jump, run and take part in many other outdoor physical activities.
- The school has worked hard to raise boys' achievement since the last inspection. It has successfully narrowed the gap in progress between boys and girls through careful planning of activities and good resources. For example, the space theme led to small groups of boys working extremely well together for an extended period to build a very imaginative 'rocket' from crates or cardboard boxes in an excellent outdoor activity.
- The growing number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those who find learning difficult, do well in all areas of learning. In their first term at school they often make outstanding progress and very rapidly develop some good basic skills. This is due to the good support provided by all staff, which helps children on a one-to-one basis but also helps them to be fully included with their classmates in all activities. Staff quickly identify any barriers to learning or any vulnerable children who may need extra support. For example, one parent praised staff highly for the way they supported her child's speaking skills.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is largely good. Some outstanding examples were seen in group sessions and some of the one-to-one exchanges between adults and children. The best teaching challenges and extends children's learning very effectively. For example, children's observations and comments about how they were sitting led to a discussion about circles and semi-circles. However, staff occasionally miss opportunities to develop more meaningful conversations with children to extend their knowledge and develop their thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Adults reflect on their practice at the end of each day, when individual children's learning is discussed and their next steps planned. A restructuring of staffing and ongoing training have

helped to improve the quality of teaching since the last inspection by building on strengths and improving recognised weaker areas. This is evident in children's better achievement.

- There is a good balance between child-chosen and adult-led activities, and indoor and outdoor activities. The small group sessions are used well to teach specific skills. The relationships between staff and children are very positive and praised by parents. Because of these good relationships, children are keen to learn and follow instructions well. Their enjoyment of learning was highlighted by a comment one child made while standing in the mud and snow under frosty trees: 'This is the best day ever!'
- There is a good mix of experience among the teachers and nursery nurses. They work extremely well as a team, planning and tracking children's learning together. Staff are also positive about learning from each other. This has helped to ensure the smooth introduction of the 'forest school' activities, and when the headteacher led training on recent changes to areas of learning and the programmes of work.
- Planning is based on the frequent assessments made of children's learning. Staff share their observations with specific children's key workers so no learning is missed. This enables staff to plan specific activities very effectively. Parents are kept very well informed about children's work at the start and end of every session and through the 'Learning Journey' books, although they have little opportunity to contribute to these through feedback on learning moments that have occurred at home.
- Staff plan work well to address any barriers to learning. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs have some excellent support from adults on a one-to-one basis, as well as being fully included in all activities. In addition, all staff work hard to promote the learning of children who are at an early stage of learning English. The staff clearly enjoy being part of the nursery team and working with the children. All staff strongly agree that they are proud to be a member of staff at this school.

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

- Behaviour is outstanding because the relationships among children, and between children and adults, are very strong. Because of this, children develop excellent attitudes towards learning new things and take a full and active part in activities. They settle very quickly at the start of sessions and enjoy their time at school. Children are learning to share and work together exceptionally well. This is evident in many activities, for example when two girls cooperated very effectively to create a space station home for toy animals.
- The nursery goes to great lengths to provide a safe learning environment. The staff ensure that all learning opportunities inside, and outside when children go on visits, are checked for risks in detail. This includes the 'forest school' work in local woods. Parents agree that their children are very well cared for and are safe at the nursery. All those spoken to, or who completed questionnaires, were very positive about how much their children enjoyed school.
- The success in building children's self-esteem and well-being is evident in much of the nursery's work. This includes the way adults talk to children, fostering their independence and responsibility. For example, the access to a snack and drink provides children with excellent opportunities to follow routines and learn basic hygiene rules. Children show very strong levels of care for each other and play together happily.
- Attendance is promoted very effectively and is often above that typically found in nursery

schools. Any persistent absence is followed up well by the school. This is effective in supporting most parents and carers to build good habits of attendance and punctuality for their children's future education. It also reflects how much children enjoy the school. As one parent said, 'Even when sick he wants to come.'

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher has led the school outstandingly well since her appointment after the last inspection. This has had a positive impact on the children's education. She has ensured that all staff are strongly focused on raising children's attainment and helping create the best possible conditions for their learning. A good example of their willingness to look outside for new ideas and to adopt and share good practice has been the introduction of new music and movement activities.
- The support from the local authority has been effective in improving teaching and developing the school's self-evaluation activities. Aspects of the school's practice, particularly with regard to physical activities and how staff can support other private or independent settings, are used across the city.
- Many changes to staffing have taken place since the last inspection. Staff work together well as a team, sharing information about children's learning at regular meetings. The continual search for improvement is evident in the procedures for managing staff performance, which are firmly based on the priorities in the school development plans but also take account of individual training needs.
- Staff provide a well-planned range of interesting learning opportunities. In addition to the school's day-to-day work, visitors include the police and a theatre company. Children learn about other cultures and different festivals, enjoying good opportunities to taste different foods. The improved use of the outdoors and the recent 'forest school' initiative are effective in supporting children's knowledge and understanding of the world and their environmental awareness. All have equal opportunities to take part in any of these special events.
- The school has exceptionally close links with a wide range of outside agencies, and particularly the children's centre. This benefits all children, but especially those who are more vulnerable and those who receive all-day care. Parents praise the support they receive from staff on a variety of issues relating to parenting and dealing with other agencies. However, the school does not yet give them sufficient knowledge and information about how they can help their child's learning at home and then share this with the nursery staff.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governors have a good level of knowledge and expertise in early years education. They are very committed to the school, and are keen to ensure it continues to improve. They hold the school to account through a range of monitoring activities, including visits to observe it in action. These have recently included aspects such as the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those at an early stage of learning English. Finances are well managed and available money is used effectively. Governors have a good understanding of the performance of the children and the headteacher, and the arrangements for continually improving the performance of all staff. They are fully aware of how this is linked to staff pay, and ensure that the evaluation of the quality of teaching is rigorous. Governors ensure that all national requirements, including those for safeguarding, are met.

## 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>	112479
<b>Local authority</b>	Derby
<b>Inspection number</b>	401269

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>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	58
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Christine Merrick
<b>Headteacher</b>	Janet King
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	March 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01332 371769
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