

St. Philips Marsh Nursery School

Albert Crescent, St Philips Marsh, Bristol, BS2 0SU

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- The well-respected headteacher works closely with the deputy headteacher and other senior staff. Together they provide effective, encouraging leadership to make good use of staff skills and drive further improvement, especially in the quality of teaching.
- Governors contribute strongly to this improvement; they help to sustain good links with parents and the local community and to ensure all statutory requirements, including safeguarding children's welfare, are fully met.
- All staff work extremely well as a team to sustain a wonderfully calm and reassuring atmosphere in all parts of the school and to sustain exemplary care, guidance and support for all the children.
- In response, children behave extremely well, greatly enjoy coming to school and contribute fully to their learning.
- Teaching is good and at times it is outstanding. Teaching is rooted in staff using their close knowledge of children to give them the timely individual attention they need to grow in confidence and access learning for themselves.
- As a result, children throw themselves wholeheartedly into their learning and achieve well by the time they leave the school.
- Staff are very mindful of the rich mix of social and cultural backgrounds reflected in the school community. They organise a stimulating range of events at the school to celebrate this diversity to enrich the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Outdoor physical activity, warm relationships and developing children's ability to learn with each other also typify joyful day-to-day activity at the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding to ensure that children's achievement is outstanding, especially in extending their understanding of early reading and mathematical skills.
- Children are not always provided with enough readily accessible opportunities to more successfully develop their ideas and early writing skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector spent two days at the school and completed 14 observations of teaching and was accompanied by the headteacher during some of these observations.
- The inspector observed and talked with children at work, at lunch and play.
- The inspector visited and met with children and their parents in the Family Support Room and observed the Breakfast Club.
- Meetings were held with with nursery school staff, including senior leaders, and with governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of 25 staff questionnaires.
- The inspector also took account of 16 parents' responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and undertaking the inspection.
- The inspector examined parents' responses evident in the school's own questionnaires and also spoke informally with a number of parents.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on children's progress, school improvement planning, leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Alex Baxter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school caters for children aged between three and four years in the Early Years Foundation Stage and is broadly average in size in comparison with similar settings.
- This nursery currently meets the needs of 145 children, who attend on a part-time basis, either during the morning or afternoon sessions, and some children stay for lunch. The number of children attending increases significantly over the school year and, when full, the school becomes one of the largest nursery schools in the Bristol area.
- The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average.
- Children of Nursery age are not eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families).
- The majority of children are of White British heritage and have English as their first language. Just over a third of the children are from minority ethnic groups and 15% have English as an additional language.
- The proportion of children with special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or by a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Additional funding and extra adult support are provided for several children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching to ensure that children's achievement is outstanding, particularly in developing early reading, literacy and mathematics skills by:
 - more consistently grasping opportunities within everyday learning activities to emphasise the sounds that letters make and to extend children's understanding of number and mathematical language
 - encouraging more parents to make use of the school library and to read stories to their children at home
 - providing the children with more readily accessible opportunities in classrooms and in the outdoor learning area to record their ideas and to further develop their early mark-making and writing skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The majority of children arrive at the nursery with skills that are below those typical for their age; often levels of skill in communication and language are even lower.
- The children make at least good progress, with most working at levels typical for their age by the time they leave the school. This reflects good achievement overall, including for children with special educational needs, those from minority ethnic groups and other children in receipt of free school meals. It also shows that many children have made exceptional progress in speaking and listening and in developing self-confidence and readiness to learn.
- Much of this also stems from the high level of individual adult support that all children receive and which enables any gaps in achievement to be narrowed quickly. This is especially the case, for example, for those children who have previously experienced delays in development, and for children who have English as an additional language, who also make rapid progress in communicating and learning with others.
- At times though, children's progress in developing early reading, writing and mathematical skills is not as quick as in their speaking and social skills. This is because opportunities to extend these skills and others such as learning the sounds that letters make are not always emphasised as frequently across children's everyday learning activities.
- Similarly at times, children are expected by adults, or independently, to count to ten and beyond, and make good use of several painting and chalk-marking activities, but such opportunities to begin to write are not readily identified with equal success in all classes.
- Children learn to speak and listen well. Their willingness and ability to offer their ideas in discussions with each other and with adults also greatly enrich their success in finding things out for themselves. For example, children demonstrate their creative and imaginative skills when talking about the differing sounds they can make in the 'Sounds Garden' and describe the various trains and parts needed to make their toy railway tracks.
- Children also show good physical skills when skilfully and often speedily riding the plentiful supply of large wheeled toys. Children also show patience and precision when threading pasta to make necklaces, further demonstrating their impressive commitment to learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is never less than good and on several occasions the teaching seen during the inspection was outstanding. This picture of consistently effective teaching is also evident in the school's own records, and data of children's good progress also show that this quality of teaching has been sustained over time.
- Staff check the children's progress effectively and know the children as unique individuals. Carefully planned support for disabled children, those who have special educational needs and for children who have English as an additional language ensures that needs are identified and tackled successfully at a very early stage.
- The exemplary care and frequently individual guidance provided by all the staff are key reasons why children settle so quickly and contribute so enthusiastically and effectively to their learning.
- Teachers, nursery nurses and other support staff all make good use of the school's excellent range of indoor and outdoor resources to stimulate children's learning and to extend their speaking and listening skills.
- For example, encouraging children to explore their ideas through role play, retelling stories about trolls, making castles out of blocks or and picking out dinosaurs from a collection of toy animals are all supported extremely well by the teachers' focused questioning to develop new learning.

- At this early stage of the year, an exemplary and very carefully planned focus is placed on settling new children by inviting them alongside their parents to engage fully in a range of activities. As a result, children in all parts of the school, including in the welcoming 'Breakfast Club', enjoy a boost to their confidence and experience a joy in learning together that underpins success in future learning.
- Although taught well on a regular basis, at times opportunities to further develop the children's understanding of letter sounds, mathematical concepts and early writing skills through everyday activity are sometimes missed.
- Steps are already being taken to address this by further developing the role of the 'Key Person', the adult responsible for a particular group of children, so that next steps for improvement can be grasped at every opportunity to accelerate progress.
- The use of the school's spacious outdoor area is a particular feature in supporting children's learning across a full and stimulating range of activities, especially their physical and creative development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The children's exemplary behaviour and great enjoyment of school reflects the reassurance they feel from the high standards of care and support they receive in equal measure from all staff.
- School records of the additional individual support given to the children, for example to those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, also show that these high quality features have been typical strengths over time.
- Especially for their very young age, the children demonstrate exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. This stems from the school's excellent promotion of the children's self-confidence and independence in learning and from their parents' equally high confidence in the way all adults in the school safeguard the children's welfare.
- The children's unwavering full engagement and contributions to learning commence the moment they enter school. They move swiftly into their activities at the start of each day during 'Welcome Time', eagerly sharing ideas and demonstrating warm respectful relationships with each other and with adults.
- Children take turns respectfully when sharing ideas during 'Small Group Time' and during 'Recall Time', when they talk about what they have been doing and learning. The children also busily and exuberantly tidy up before moving from one activity to the next, responding joyfully to the teachers' prompting by singing, 'We've stopped, we've finished, time to get busy!'
- The children also show genuine interest in each other's views and love playing and learning together and their contributions continue throughout the school day, including during 'Garden Time', to significantly enrich the quality of their learning. For example, riding tricycles and scooters and role-playing 'crossing the road' safely in the secure outdoor area show how the children are very willing to work together in learning how to keep themselves and each other safe.
- Without exception, parents' responses on 'Parent View', in the school's own questionnaire and when speaking to the inspector all reflected their full agreement that the school keeps their children safe. One parent commented, 'My son has thrived at St Philips!'
- School incident logs and the children's good attendance and air of confidence in whatever they are doing at school also show that there is no bullying and that children feel safe.

The leadership and management are good

- The very capable headteacher has worked skilfully over the past year to settle new staff, including at a senior level, and to instil the high level of staff morale now evident in their

completed questionnaires.

- Senior leaders, including governors, identify the strengths and weaknesses of teaching effectively. Checks of the quality of teaching and the use of performance management to inform progression along pay scales and to identify training needs are managed efficiently and supportively, and are successfully focused on improving children's achievement.
- The school's excellent induction of new children, which smoothly builds on the close relations begun in the 'Family Support Room', reflects the strengthening consistency of practice across the school. Although the process of developing the role of key person continues, to make even better use of next steps in raising children's achievements, a strong team ethic is driving forward improvement.
- This is seen in the way staff are using the new, but very efficient, system, to check and improve children's progress by identifying and tackling their needs at a very early stage, not least to boost children's self-confidence and contributions to learning.
- Senior leaders, including governors, have also been highly effective in creating a stimulating range of learning facilities and resources to extend children's learning activities. These often include events such as 'African-Caribbean Day' to which parents and members of the community are invited, and which also celebrate and nurture the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Staff and governors promote good relationships with the parents in support of the children's learning. Currently they are encouraging the further use of the school library to support parents in reading stories to their children at home.
- All staff are also rigorous in sustaining excellent care and safeguarding procedures and consistently ensure equal opportunities for all children to learn successfully. For example, individualised support for children with special educational needs, those who have English as an additional language and for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable is closing gaps in previous learning and promoting equally good achievement for all children.
- The local authority provides suitably 'light touch' support to this good and improving school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school well and take advantage of regular training to make sure that strategic and financial decisions, such as developing outdoor learning facilities, systematically improve the quality of teaching and children's learning. Governors provide beneficial support and challenge to staff leaders in helping to sustain the school's strong capacity for further improvement. For example, governors visit the school frequently and join with senior staff in undertaking 'curriculum walks' which are particularly focused on aspects such as providing additional staff to help new children to settle quickly. Such first-hand observations, backed up by close discussions with staff, ensure that governors are able to make informed decisions about staff promotion and salary issues. Through their various sub-committees, members of the governing body also ensure full adherence to all their statutory duties, including those relating to safeguarding children's welfare. Governors also carefully check the use of additional funds to meet children's varying needs, including for those with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language, and to close any gaps in achievement.

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	108893
Local authority	Bristol
Inspection number	426723

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Enza Phillips
Headteacher	Simon Holmes
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 October 2010
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