

# The Brambles Nursery School

Bramble Road, Southsea, Portsmouth, PO4 0DT

**Inspection dates** 1–2 October 2013

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- High priority given to the care and safety of children helps them to settle quickly and develop confidence and independence.
- Children behave well, develop very good relationships with others and carry out activities enthusiastically. They are well prepared for moving into infant school.
- Children's good progress ensures most reach the levels expected for their age by the time they leave. Increasingly they are exceeding these levels, especially in their personal, emotional and social, and physical development.
- Children are well taught because staff take good account of their development needs and interests. Exciting and fun activities motivate children well.
- The headteacher is a very skilled leader who is supported well by staff and governors. Together, they use their accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development to drive forward improvement well. The nursery is well placed to improve further.
- Governors are very committed to the nursery and hold staff to account effectively for the quality of teaching and children's achievement.
- The work of the federation benefits nursery staff and children. This is seen in the effective leadership teams that work well together to check the quality of the schools' work and provide support. There are also joint opportunities for training, for example, in how to involve parents and carers more in supporting their children's learning at home.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching is not outstanding, partly because occasionally staff do not raise the level of challenge for the children who are learning quickly. Staff do not always provide enough daily opportunities for mark making and writing.
- The procedures for checking and supporting the performance of staff other than teachers are not fully developed.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven sessions led by teachers and nursery nurses. Two sessions were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior members of staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Informal discussions took place with children during the observation times.
- The inspector observed other aspects of the school's work including monitoring and planning documents and records of children's progress. Safeguarding policies, practices and records were also looked at.
- The inspector took account of the 16 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and a small number of parents and carers bringing their children to the maintained nursery were also spoken to.
- The inspector analysed responses from the 13 staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Diane Wilkinson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Brambles is an average-sized maintained nursery school which provides funded nursery education for children of three and four years of age.
- The nursery also provides childcare for children aged nought to four years, with around half the nursery children having previously attended one or more of the childcare classes. The childcare provision was inspected separately by the Ofsted early years inspectorate in July 2013.
- The nursery is part of a federation with Goldsmith Infant school. They share a headteacher and governing body, and some aspects of leadership and management are carried out by teams of staff from both schools. The infant school was inspected by a different inspection team, also in October 2013.
- Most nursery children attend on a part-time basis, some for the morning or afternoon sessions and some for about half of the week. Some children also stay for lunch.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs supported by early years action or early years action plus is broadly average. Their needs mainly relate to speech, language and communication. Currently no children on roll are disabled or have a statement of special educational needs.
- Over a third of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds and speak English as an additional language.
- No children are eligible for the pupil premium as they are not of the statutory age to receive it. The school does not receive any primary sports funding.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
  - ensuring that staff take full account of all the information available on children’s progress, including that provided by their parents and carers, when planning the next steps in learning
  - planning more opportunities for mark making and writing
  - consistently moving children on to new goals throughout activities when they are learning quickly in order to help their attainment rise even further.
- Fully establish systems for managing and improving the performance of staff other than teachers so that they can have a greater impact on children’s progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most children enter the maintained class with skills below the levels expected for their age although the skills of children who previously attended the childcare provision tend to be more developed. However, the very large majority of children are weaker in early literacy and numeracy skills and around 20% have speech, language and communication difficulties.
- Children make good progress and most reach the levels expected in the majority of development areas, including in oral language skills, because of strong support for this aspect. Not content with this, staff have worked hard to raise the proportion exceeding age-related levels, and have been especially successful in personal, social and emotional, and physical development.
- The proportion exceeding the expected levels is also increasing in other areas. In particular, the strong focus over the last year on phonics (the sounds letters make in words) and encouragement of number work has had a positive effect. Staff are now targeting writing which is a priority area for development.
- Numerous opportunities for identifying shapes and counting or comparing numbers help children develop very secure numeracy skills. The more able count beyond the level expected and know the meaning of 'one more' or 'one less'.
- Children greatly enjoy stories, regularly retelling the action and using the pictures just as nursery staff do. The more-able children have a good understanding of the sounds most individual letters make.
- They enjoy role play, for example in the cottage in the outdoor area or in the tent, where, as the children themselves said, they dressed warmly to 'stop the cold getting to us'. Children use toys well to devise a variety of stories often talking through the action as they move them around. Children take great care with their paintings, proudly taking them home to their parents and carers.
- Children's recording of numbers up to 10 and sometimes beyond is good, but mark making to help develop early writing skills and the formation of some letters is underdeveloped.
- Children's fine and gross motor skills develop well. Children handle resources confidently, as was observed in their use of a range of construction equipment. They use paintbrushes and pencils well in their artwork. Children exhibit considerable dexterity on the climbing frame, taking well-judged risks as to what they can achieve.
- Children are very curious about the world around them, taking great delight in their 'spider hunt' and carefully recording their discoveries on a tally chart. Investigating growing things is a source of delight, especially the vegetables children help grow themselves.
- The nursery's strong promotion of equality of opportunity is evident in the wide range of support for disabled children, those with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language. As a result all of these groups achieve well, with the majority reaching at least the levels expected for their age.
- The more-able children achieve well and exceed the levels expected by the end of the year.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- All staff have good knowledge of the needs of nursery children and are skilled at providing an effective range of activities across all development areas. There is a good balance of opportunities for children to learn new things with an adult or discover things for themselves.
- Activities are carefully planned to help children do their best, taking account of the levels at which the more-able children are working. The most skilful staff are proficient at adapting learning throughout activities, and when this happens excellent learning takes place. However, only on a minority of occasions is learning extended well for those children who are learning quickly, and this limits their attainment.

- New learning is modelled well, for example in how to count and 'use your fingers'. Children also love counting toys, as was observed in the 'Ten in the bed', activity, helping them enhance their understanding of number well.
- Effective training in phonics has helped staff to ensure that more children recognise the basic sounds in words.
- The management of behaviour is excellent, so that by the time they leave the nursery, children's concentration and readiness to learn is very good.
- Staff are adept at questioning or involving children in discussions to help their understanding although on a very small minority of occasions too much information is given regarding things the more-able children could discover for themselves.
- Continuous assessment of children's learning is used well to plan future activities and encourage good progress. This is regularly shared with parents and carers, although opportunities for parents and carers to contribute information themselves, so that staff can take this into account when planning, are fairly recent.
- The special activities to help children catch up, for example in speech and language or in delayed development, are very effective in helping to ensure most reach the levels expected for their age by the time they leave.

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

- Children's personal, social and emotional development is a strength and provides them with a very good range of skills for their future education.
- The nursery's strong discouragement of discrimination and fostering of good relationships mean that bullying or unkind behaviour, including racist name calling, is rare. Children from a wide range of backgrounds get on very well together.
- Very good support for children who find good behaviour difficult, including those who have been excluded from nursery or pre-school settings elsewhere, ensures their behaviour improves very well over time.
- Children behave well during all nursery activities. They work and play safely although sometimes they have to be reminded not to be over-boisterous in the relatively small outdoor area.
- Lunch and snack times are very effective social occasions because staff model behaviour for these times very well. Children help serve others, patiently await their turn and say 'please' and 'thank you'.
- When children carry out independent rather than adult-led activities, they often work really well together, with the more-able children exhibiting good leadership skills. For example, during the very popular spider hunt two children were very adept at organising the group and all children helped to include others such as by saying, 'You must come and see!'
- When learning new things with an adult most children are very good at taking turns although occasionally, due to their enthusiasm, a few children want to intervene and take over from others. Staff are very sensitive at dealing with this and are good at encouraging the less confident children to join in.
- Rigorous procedures in place help ensure children are well cared for. They feel very safe and secure in the nursery, confidently seeking help when they need it. Children say that 'adults are kind to us', especially when they are upset. Both inspection evidence and parents and carers agree this is the case.
- Despite the nursery's strong promotion of regular attendance there is still a higher than average absence rate. Staff work hard to ensure that this does not have a negative impact on children's progress and, unless informed, staff always telephone home when a child is absent to ensure there is a reasonable explanation rather than cause for concern.

## The leadership and management are good

- The federation has had a considerable impact on the nursery's work, providing a wide range of expertise and support for staff and the governing body. The organisational and leadership skills of the headteacher have brought rigour in judging the quality of the nursery and developing its work, as well as a vision and determination that have inspired and enabled nursery staff to tackle remaining weaknesses.
- Thorough and effective checking of the school's work ensures development planning is well targeted at important priorities. Over the past year, improvements are evident, for example, in assessing children's progress and in children's increased mathematical skills.
- The federation has enhanced the management of teachers' performance, especially through providing greater opportunities for training; for example, in aspects such as phonics and speech and language development. This has resulted in improved teaching and children's achievement.
- More recently senior leaders have extended this approach to include the appraisal of all other nursery staff and increased the range of evidence collected to support and develop the work of these staff. However, these systems are not yet completely established and so it is too early to see the full impact.
- The interesting and motivating curriculum, effectively based on children's needs and interests, provides well for their development and well-being. Those children who receive extra support, including from external professionals, are provided with well-designed activities to help them catch up.
- Children's spiritual development is enhanced by the many opportunities for reflection and their moral and social development is promoted especially well. Staff work hard to ensure that children respect differences, especially in the religions and cultures of all those who attend the nursery.
- The strong emphasis on continuous checking of anything that might give concern for children's welfare ensures safeguarding arrangements fully meet requirements. The attention given to any child who might be at risk, including through child protection issues, is excellent.
- Parents and carers are extremely appreciative of the nursery and feel well informed about its work, especially through the continuous opportunities to check on their children's progress. The partnership with parents and carers is being strengthened through increasing parents' and carers' contribution to learning and assessment. Partnerships with other schools and agencies are very productive and benefit children's education and welfare especially well.
- The local authority provided good support and challenge during the transition to federated status, especially to help staff achieve their vision of a coherent approach to education between nought and seven years of age. Advice and training in a wide range of areas, such as enhancing support for children in local authority care, increasing children's vocabulary skills and improving assessment procedures, have increased staff expertise well in these areas. Acknowledging the benefits this has brought to children, the federation has requested continuing support although the local authority is confident that Brambles remains a good nursery that needs only 'light touch' support.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors' very strong commitment is evident in the excellent partnership working with staff to help ensure that the federation is a success and that both schools continue to improve. Governors provide a good level of challenge and support, one governor remarking that 'in meetings questions always take a long time'.
  - Governors know the nursery well and effectively hold leaders to account for teaching quality and children's progress through a range of information. They are strongly committed to training, especially in important areas such as safeguarding and data on children's progress, and recognise the importance of enhancing their first-hand monitoring skills further.
  - Astute appointments to the governing body have helped provide a range of expertise, such as in special educational needs, that governors willingly use to support staff, including through their link governor roles.
  - Statutory duties with regard to performance management of teaching staff are fully met, with

governors well informed about teaching quality and agreeing salary increases only for good performance.

## 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>	115829
<b>Local authority</b>	Portsmouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	426563

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>	86
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Share D'All
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Spittles
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8–9 February 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	02392 828606
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