

West Heath Nursery School

200 West Heath Road, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 3HB

Inspection dates 3–4 October 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.

- Children make outstanding progress in their personal, social and emotional development and in their acquisition of physical and communication skills. They make good progress in all other areas of learning.
- Children are well prepared for the next stage in their education because of the good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching they receive.
- Children's behaviour is exemplary; they love coming to school as they thoroughly enjoy a wide range of exciting activities.
- Parents and carers are extremely positive about the good quality education provided in a safe and secure environment.
- The headteacher leads a strong staff team very effectively. All staff have a good understanding of how young children learn.
- All leaders are committed to continually improving children's learning. Recent improvements to learning areas, both indoors and out, have given children more opportunities to solve problems and develop their creative skills.
- The governing body gives good support and challenge to the school. Governors are very keen to see the school improve even further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding to be sure that children's achievement is outstanding.
- Questioning does not always make children think deeply and extend their learning.
- The monitoring of the work of the school by senior staff and governors is not always rigorous enough in identifying ways to make children's progress more rapid.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed children learning in a wide range of activities, including activities children had chosen themselves, others led by adults, and small group work. Seven sessions were observed. Four of these were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings and discussions took place with the headteacher, staff, governors and parents. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at key inspection documents including data on children's progress, safeguarding procedures, self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, minutes of the governing body, teachers' planning and children's 'learning journey' booklets.
- The inspector analysed and took account of the 11 responses to the on-line survey Parent View and of the 12 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mary Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized nursery school.
- Children attend either on a full-time basis, or for two-and-a-half days each week.
- The large majority of children are of White British heritage, with a minority of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. A small number of children speak English as an additional language. This varies from year to year.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs supported through Early Years action is broadly average. The proportion of children supported at Early Years action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also broadly average.
- The school does not receive additional funding from the government through the pupil premium because nursery children are not funded in this way.
- All the senior staff have changed since the previous inspection. The headteacher joined the school in September 2011 with the deputy headteacher and class teacher both joining in 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching and further improve children's progress by:
 - making the best possible use of questions and discussions to encourage children, especially those who are most able, to think more deeply and talk about their learning.
- Increase the effectiveness of leaders, managers and governors by:
 - making sure that improvement points from the checking of teaching clearly identify ways to improve children's progress
 - extending the programme of checks by governors to make sure they regularly experience and report on what is provided for the children.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school with widely varying experiences, knowledge and understanding. Overall their skills are below the levels expected for their age. By the time they leave, they have made good progress; the data shows that the majority of children's skills are in line with expectations for their age, with some children exceeding this.
- Children make outstanding progress in personal, social and emotional development. This is because of the strong emphasis adults place on developing these skills, and the high quality relationships the school builds between adults and children. Children settle quickly due to staff's sensitive approaches and soon begin to enjoy the happy atmosphere and well-planned opportunities to learn and play. Children rapidly become independent learners as they ably choose resources and adapt activities themselves.
- Children's physical development is well promoted and as a result children make rapid progress. They quickly develop skills as they work with small tools, climb on apparatus, use wheeled vehicles, and learn to hold and write with a pencil. For example, a group of children were using clay to make models. They enjoyed the feel of the wet clay before shaping it into balls and using the tools to flatten the clay or add patterns.
- Children enjoy sharing books. They are keen to share a book with adults, sit quietly and listen well. They know the kinds of books they like and some are beginning to predict what is going to happen next in a story. The half-termly themed activities centred on a focused book boost children's enthusiasm for reading. By the time they leave all children can recognise their own names. Some know lots of names and some children can name letters and the sounds they make.
- Children make good progress in mark-making and early writing activities and in their awareness of number. They show developing confidence as they count the number of children present in their group and match this up to the correct numeral. However there are occasions when adults do not challenge children enough in developing their literacy skills or miss opportunities to use numbers to solve simple problems.
- Disabled children, those who have special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language make at least good and often outstanding progress. This is because staff provide for their needs very well. Staff's use of signing, symbols and pictures help children to understand routines, make choices and have their needs met.
- Boys and girls are motivated to try new things out, especially in the outdoors where the musical instruments, water area and crates are especially appealing for experiments. They develop good critical thinking skills. For example, a group of children worked well together to build a walkway with crates and boxes, then adapted it to move across it in different ways. The achievement of boys and girls is similar.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because staff have a good understanding of how young children learn best through practical activities. Staff know the children and their families well. Parents think very highly of them and appreciate both the quality of teaching and the caring approach they bring to their roles.

- Staff organise an attractive and inviting learning environment which promotes children's independence and enthusiasm for learning. Both indoor and outdoor environments provide many chances for children to engage in activities which promote their curiosity and love of learning. Children excitedly explored and developed fine motor skills as they used tweezers to fill tubes with pasta, developed good observational skills as they described and drew marrows and used a light box to explore objects. Staff are skilled in following up children's interests and enthusiasms.
- Resources are well used to motivate children and to help them develop their concentration. These are particularly well used in sessions which develop communication and language skills. Children were introduced to puppets in group sessions which helped them to develop new vocabulary, their speaking and listening skills and to gain confidence as they spoke to the puppets.
- Children work, play and share well together. They are developing a good sense of fairness and how to work together cooperatively. For example they worked together to use a range of instruments to accompany African drumming music and were learning to use the sand timer to wait for their turn on the computer. Group time, snack and lunch times also contribute well to children's social and emotional development. These times provide opportunities for children to talk together with an adult, learning to share and develop manners. They thoroughly enjoy these social occasions and are courteous and polite.
- Many staff use questioning well to get children to talk about what they are learning. Opportunities are sometimes missed for questioning to extend children's learning and to help them explore new ideas. This is particularly so for the most able children.
- The new assessment system, which uses tablet technology to gather children's observations, is contributing well to planning. Staff now have a clear picture of children's starting points and are better using data to ensure that activities are matched to children's individual needs. The school's action plan has rightly highlighted the need to further secure this system. Staff are a reflective team and daily discuss, evaluate and review children's learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour throughout the nursery is outstanding. The high quality of relationships mean that children feel very secure and show confidence and independence. Staff promote an atmosphere of positive praise and encouragement and children's behaviour is managed consistently well. Children's spiritual, moral and cultural development is very effectively nurtured by staff.
- Children are very happy to play together in pairs or groups. They show respect to one another, trust adults and are friendly and welcoming to visitors. Children who find difficulty in forming relationships are quickly identified and helped to settle because of sensitive one-to-one support from adults. The nursery is a harmonious community and all children, including those who have special needs and disabilities, are effectively included.
- Children are safe in the nursery and learn about rules for safe play both indoors and out. They are given excellent opportunities to understand about risk and to how to keep themselves safe. For example, a group of children built a tower from blocks and then carefully climbed up it and staff guided children to use knives safely when they were helping to cut fruit for snack time.
- All parents who responded to Parent View or who talked to the inspector say that their children are safe in school and that they are confident how well their children are looked after.

- Most children attend school regularly. The school works closely with parents so that they are made very aware of the importance of good attendance. Children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong, ambitious and enthusiastic leadership. She is supported well by the senior staff, governors and a highly committed staff team. All share a vision and determination to give each child the best possible start. Responses to the staff questionnaire were unanimous in their pride in the school and staff morale is high.
- Staff work well together to plan and provide a range of stimulating activities which meet the different needs of children. Recent refurbishment and alterations to the environment have made sure that children can access a wider range of activities independently and have further improved the learning environment. Developments, such as these, show that the nursery has the capacity to continue to improve.
- The school's view of its effectiveness is largely accurate. The school knows its strengths and areas to develop and a detailed improvement plan is focused on children's learning and well-being. A range of activities are used to monitor and evaluate the school's success. The checking of teaching by senior leaders does not always detail improvements which would help to boost children's progress.
- Training is effective and linked to the management of staff performance. The headteacher and governors use relevant information from observations and data to make sure that all staff are held accountable for the progress that children make.
- Staff make sure that the curriculum is rich and engaging and meets the needs of all children so they make at least good progress in the areas of learning.
- The nursery has an excellent relationship with parents who are very positive in their praise of the staff and the progress their children make. Workshops, activities and courses to help parents better understand how to support their children's learning at home and regular consultation meetings are just some of the ways in which the school helps parents to be partners in their children's learning. Several parents commented that the school 'helps the family as much as the child'.
- Leaders make sure that all safeguarding and welfare requirements are met. All adults provide an outstanding level of care for children in this nurturing environment.
- The local authority recognises the continuing good effectiveness of the school and provides appropriate 'light-touch' support.
- The school has close links with nearby schools, and works closely with them to bring about a smooth transition for children as they move up into the Reception classes. Links with the local children's centre has enabled the school to obtain additional help for any parents that need support.

■ The governance of the school:

- Since the previous inspection, several new members have been appointed and there is a wide range of experience and expertise amongst governors. Governors are committed to continuous improvement. They carry out their statutory duties and give a good level of support and challenge to the school, whilst being very supportive of staff. They know what the data is saying about how well the school is doing. The performance management of the headteacher is managed well and governors understand the link between children' progress, the quality of teaching and pay progression. They know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance. Although governors visit the school regularly, visits do not always result in a written record to enable all governors to better understand what children experience from a first-hand account. Governors manage financial resources well, making sure that money is spent wisely to support children. For example governors were responsible for budgeting for and overseeing the recent alterations to the fabric of the building.

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	103127
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	426920

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Clayton
Headteacher	Susan Worgan
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2010
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