

# Birchfield Nursery School

Victoria Avenue, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 7TH

## Inspection dates

6–7 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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 thrive in the welcoming, nurturing environment provided by staff, which enables children to feel secure and contributes to their good progress.
- All groups of children achieve well because teaching is good, activities and the environment are interesting and engaging, and relationships are positive and supportive.
- Excellent relationships with parents help to ensure that children settle quickly and develop confidence.
- Children behave extremely well. They are familiar with the well-established routines of nursery and show a very good awareness of safety.
- Leaders and managers are focussed on improvement. They use their accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development to drive forward improvement well.
- Governors are very committed to the nursery and provide a good level of support and challenge to the headteacher.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- At times, staff do not ensure that the most-able children's learning is developed to the full, through questioning them and providing activities which are matched to their needs.
- Staff do not always make the most of chances to develop children's understanding of number through everyday activities.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six sessions led by teachers and teaching assistants. One session was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior members of staff, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, and parents.
- The inspector took account of 32 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and held informal discussions with a small number of parents bringing their children to the nursery school.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's data on children's progress, the school's development plan, planning and monitoring documents, documents relating to safeguarding, and records relating to behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Elaine Murray, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Birchfield Nursery is an average-sized nursery school which provides funded nursery education for children of three and four years of age.
- Children attend for either morning or afternoon sessions.
- There are no disabled children or those who have special educational needs supported through early years action. The proportion of children supported through early years action plus is below average.
- Almost all children are White British. A very small number speaks English as an additional language.
- The nursery has links with other local nurseries, and with a local high school which is adjacent to the nursery site.

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

- Raise the quality of teaching and children's achievement to outstanding by:
  - making better use of staff knowledge of children's abilities to ensure that activities and staff questioning extend learning for the more-able children
  - further developing chances for children to learn about number through everyday activities.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

**is good**

- Children join the nursery with a range of skills and experiences that are typically in line with those expected for their age. Aspects of personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy are below expected levels for some children.
- All groups of children make good progress. By the time they leave nursery, the majority of children have skill levels above expectations for their age. In cases where children have entered nursery with skill levels below expectations in some areas of learning, they leave nursery with skill levels in line with expectation in these areas. This represents good progress.
- The small number of children with special educational needs make good progress as they are supported well. Staff work well with outside agencies and parents to make sure children's needs are met.
- The few children for whom English is an additional language are also supported well. Staff provide one-to-one time for children to develop their use and understanding of English. Staff also learn words of the children's first languages so that children feel included and valued, and so grow in confidence.
- Children display good progress in developing early reading skills. They show a keen interest in stories. They choose books independently to look at and enthusiastically engage in story time, joining in repeated phrases and discussing what might happen next in the story. Children show growing confidence in recognising the initial letter sounds of their name.
- Children's number recognition and counting skills are developed well through rhymes and other activities. Children are learning to recognise numbers to five and beyond and confidently identify shapes in the indoor climbing apparatus.
- Children show good progress in developing confidence and concentration skills. Some children work with sustained concentration to create 'lakes' in the outdoor area by digging and filling the holes with water.
- Children's physical skills are developed well through a broad range of activities. They enthusiastically use climbing equipment, and run in the indoor and outdoor areas. They develop skills using arm and hand movements to manipulate playdough to music in the 'Dough disco'.
- The more-able children's skills are extended when staff question them effectively to develop their learning. Children are encouraged to think what is the best way to catch water leaking from a pipe outdoors, and in a number activity to think which number is bigger than seven. At times, these children do not make as much progress as they could, because staff questions do not provide sufficient challenge.

### The quality of teaching

**is good**

- Children are motivated and engaged in their learning because staff provide a wide range of stimulating activities which are related to children's interests.
- Staff establish very positive relationships with children. They make good use of praise and encouragement to promote children's self-esteem and confidence effectively.
- Staff engage well with children's self-chosen activities to promote learning. In the role-play hospital children enthusiastically act as doctors and nurses to tend to the member of staff who is a 'patient'. Through asking open questions such as, 'Why do you want to do that?' children's thinking skills and language development are promoted well.
- Staff have a good knowledge of children's abilities and generally use this well to plan future activities and promote good progress. On occasion, the activities provided do not present enough challenge for the more-able children and so their learning is not developed to the full.
- Children's early reading skills are promoted well. Through good use of 'story time', teachers encourage a love and understanding of books and stories. Children's understanding of rhymes

and letter sounds is also developed well.

- Staff plan activities to promote children's recognition and understanding of number effectively. They make use of chances to develop children's understanding of shape recognition, such as recognising circles in the indoor climbing equipment. They do not always ensure that best use is made of chances to develop children's understanding of number in everyday situations.
- The indoor and outdoor learning environments make a positive contribution to children's learning. Children benefit from accessing a number of different well-resourced rooms indoors. Outdoors the spacious area provides a wealth of chance for children to develop learning as they explore the mud tray, digging area, wigwam, car wash area, climbing area, and make enthusiastic use of mark-making materials.

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

- Children are highly engaged in tasks and activities and develop very positive attitudes to learning. They happily take turns as they make apple pies and work well together to operate the outdoor 'car wash'.
- Children respond well to staff's high expectations during session times and as they move between different rooms in the nursery and use the outdoor area. They have a clear understanding of nursery routines and this helps them to feel secure.
- The key person works extremely well, where children relate to a particular staff member who oversees their progress and well-being. Changes to this system to ensure that children spend more time in each session with their key worker have had a positive effect. Each child forms a caring relationship with a member of staff and as a result settle quickly and are secure within nursery.
- Children show consideration towards each other and cooperate extremely well during their play. In the role-play hospital they enthusiastically 'treat' each other's 'injuries', showing concern and kindness.
- Staff are vigilant in promoting children's knowledge about safety by talking with them at every opportunity, for example about how to handle tools safely and use climbing apparatus. As a result, children show a very well-developed awareness of safety in both indoor and outdoor areas.
- 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.
- Staff manage children's behaviour extremely well and those who find managing their own behaviour more challenging show great improvements because of the excellent support that staff provide.
- Children's level of attendance is good, and this reflects the school's positive efforts to stress the importance of regular attendance to parents and children.

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

- School leaders have a clear commitment to providing the best possible start for children and are strongly focussed on improvement. Improvements to the school building, the key worker system and ways of tracking the progress children make have made a positive difference to children's learning.
- The development of a new way of tracking children's progress means that the school has a more accurate view of the progress of different groups of children. This has enabled them to identify priorities for development more accurately. As a result, there have been improvements, for example, in children's progress in personal, social and emotional development.
- There is a clear system in place to manage teachers' and teaching assistants' performance. Staff are set targets to improve which link to the school's overall plan for improvement and attend

relevant training, for example in planning and assessment. This has led to improvements in the quality of teaching.

- Leaders create a positive, purposeful environment for learning and are welcoming and inclusive. Staff are happy, settled and positive about the school.
- The local authority knows that this is a good school and has provided positive support to the headteacher since her appointment.
- An extremely positive partnership with parents ensures that they are very well-informed about what their children are learning and how they can promote this at home. Parents are highly appreciative of the nursery. They praise the commitment and warm approachability of staff and comment on the good progress their children make whilst at nursery.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors provide a good level of support and challenge to the school. They ensure that decisions are made only after thorough consultation to ensure that any changes are in the best interests of children's well-being and learning. For example, a decision to extend sessions from two and a half to three hours was made after careful consideration of the impact this would have.
- The governing body has a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are fully involved in development planning and work well with the headteacher and assistant headteacher to drive improvements forward.
- Governors hold leaders to account for teaching quality and children's progress. They have a good understanding of the data the school provides. They help to ensure that pay matches 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>	110958
<b>Local authority</b>	Halton
<b>Inspection number</b>	426205

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>	3–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	88
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Green
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lindsey Weedall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 February 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 424 4681
<b>Fax number</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Email address</b>	head.birchfieldnursery@halton.gov.uk



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