

# Thornton Lodge Nursery School

128a Yews Hill Road, Lockwood, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD1 3SP

## Inspection dates

13–14 November 2013

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Children's achievement requires improvement because they do not all make enough progress from their starting points during their time in the nursery.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent, with some that requires improvement. This is preventing some children from making good progress.
- Where teaching is less effective, opportunities are sometimes missed to support children's developing skills in literacy and numeracy during their play activities.

### The school has the following strengths

- In those activities in the nursery where teaching is good, children make good progress and achieve well.
- Children learning English as an additional language are supported well and make good progress in developing their communication skills.
- Children with special educational needs are identified quickly and given the help they need to make good progress from their starting points.
- The Forest School curriculum has been very successful in taking and extending learning out of doors. It provides memorable and highly enjoyable experiences for children.
- Children behave very well and feel settled and secure in the nursery.
- Leaders have strengthened the systems for checking on the quality and effect of the nursery's work. They are currently taking decisive actions to improve teaching and have a clear picture of what more needs to be done to achieve this.
- Systems for checking on children's progress have also been strengthened, giving leaders an improved overview of how well everyone is doing.
- Governors support the nursery well and check on its work and on the children's progress.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a wide range of activities in the nursery over the two inspection days, including observations of children in activities they had chosen for themselves, in activities led by adults and in small group activities led by staff members.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other staff members. The inspectors met with three members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at children's learning files, the displays of their work and records of their progress.
- A range of school documentation was reviewed including the school development plan, the school's own evaluations of how well it is doing, minutes of governing body meetings and records of the checks that are made on teaching. The inspector also checked documentation on safeguarding, child protection, behaviour, attendance and health and safety.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to properly reflect the views of parents. However, the inspector spoke informally with a number of parents during the inspection; she took into account responses to the school's own parental surveys and a letter received from an individual parent.

## Inspection team

Diane Auton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger than average sized nursery. It provides part-time places for children in morning and afternoon sessions.
- The proportion of children supported at Early Years Action and at Early Years Action Plus is broadly average. There are currently no children on roll with a statement of special educational needs.
- The majority of children are from British Asian backgrounds, with Punjabi as their main home language. Other children are from a wide range of backgrounds and heritages, including White British.
- Thornton Lodge Nursery School's accommodation is on two sites, with a distance of one and a half miles between them. One of the two classes operates from the nursery's own premises, while the other is housed in part of a Sure Start children's centre building.
- The nursery offers day care for children aged from two to four on the children's centre site. The day care provision was not included in this inspection and will be inspected separately by Ofsted.
- There have been changes in leadership and staffing since the time of the nursery's last inspection.
- Since April 2012, the nursery has been federated with an infant school, which is situated on the same campus as the children's centre.
- The federated schools and the day care provision are led and managed by a single headteacher with two deputy headteachers. One of the deputy headteachers has special responsibility for overseeing early years education, including the Reception class in the infant school and Thornton Lodge Nursery.
- A new governing body was created at the time the federation began; it has responsibility for both schools and for the day care.
- The school does not receive additional funding from the government through the pupil premium because nursery schools are not funded in this way.

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

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better, in order to enable all of the children to make speedy progress in their learning, by:
  - further implementing the school's systems for checking on the quality and effect of teaching
  - continuing to share and develop skills across the staff team.
- Continue to develop staff skills in supporting children's early learning in literacy and numeracy, in order to ensure that children are always given the support they require to achieve well in establishing their basic skills.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Although the majority of children join the nursery with skills at typical levels for their age, a significant minority are at an earlier stage in their development, especially in their speech and language and in their self-help skills. While many children who do not have English as their first language at home have already started to develop some bi-lingual skills, a small proportion of children are still at very early stages of learning to speak English when they start in the nursery.
- The nursery's records of children's progress indicate that some may be making only minimal progress from their starting points, while others are progressing at a more rapid pace. Inspection evidence confirms this. Observations of children in their activities showed that the rate of their progress is linked directly to the quality of teaching, with slower progress resulting when teaching requires improvement and better progress where teaching is most effective.
- Because staff and leaders are skilled at identifying children's many and differing needs, they are able to apply well-judged levels of individual support for those children who need extra help. This means that those children who have special educational needs and those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable gain considerable benefit from attending nursery and are enabled to progress well, especially in their personal, social and emotional development, and often from low starting points.
- Children who are learning to speak English make good progress in developing their language skills, both in their home languages and in their increasingly confident use of English.
- There is no difference between the achievement of children in minority groups, including White British children, and that of everyone else in the nursery.
- Children usually make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They try hard to do things for themselves, such as putting on coats and boots to play outdoors or remembering to wash their hands after messy activities or before snack time.
- Good teaching in one of the settings is helping children to start to recognise sounds in words and the letters that represent them. In this setting, children show a real interest in these small group sessions and are starting to make good progress in early literacy. This development is not yet fully under way in the other setting, although children have begun learning to recognise and copy their names.
- Children are learning to record their counting activities by writing numbers or by making marks on paper. They are learning to recognise and name shapes with increasing accuracy. Activities using computer software programmes or with toys that can be programmed are helping them to establish skills in using information and communication technology. Once again, however, their progress in all of these areas was seen to be more rapid in one of the classes than in the other, where teaching was less effective.
- Children from both settings benefit from good teaching in the well-planned Forest School curriculum which is provided through the federated schools. The Forest School enables them to experience opportunities to solve problems and make decisions through adventurous outdoor activities; this is contributing well to their physical development and to their growing self-confidence and resilience.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The school's records testify that teaching was generally good in both settings during the last school year. In the current year, leaders have identified that the quality of teaching is uneven across the nursery. Inspection evidence confirms that teaching in one of the settings requires improvement, while good teaching was seen in the other, larger, setting and in the Forest School activities.
- Where teaching is less effective, it is usually because activities are not planned with sufficient care and, as a result, can lack purpose. Sometimes children are not sure what to do next when

an activity comes to an end, because 'next steps' have not been planned or discussed with them. This makes for a slower pace of learning with too few opportunities for children to become absorbed in tasks which would help them develop and build on new skills. The available resources for play are not always chosen well enough to provide challenge, for example, jigsaw puzzles set out for the children to work with were too easy for the most able children.

- Where teaching is good, adults provide stimulating activities that are relevant to children's interests and support learning and progress well. In a group activity with their teacher in the outdoor classroom, for example, children responded enthusiastically to her idea of making a 'silly soup' in a big pot, finding 'ingredients' for it by hunting out of doors for objects beginning with 's', which was today's special sound. They worked together well, made decisions about which objects should or should not go in the pot, and were able to tell their friends about it at group time later in the morning.
- Every child has a designated key worker who has an overview of how they are doing and is the first point of contact for parents. Children spend time with their key worker in a small group at the beginning and end of each session. A 'group time' seen during the inspection was cut short because of poor time-management by the class teacher and, as a result, its effectiveness in rounding off the morning session in a meaningful way for the children was reduced. More effective teaching was seen in other groups, however, where children enjoyed looking back on the session they had just taken part in and key workers took opportunities to ask astute questions to help them assess how well everyone had done.
- Teaching assistants often contribute well to children's learning and progress; they often provide effective support for children who have additional needs, including those at an early stage of learning English.
- Staff are often skilful in promoting children's early literacy or number skills through play activities. For example, in one class, children weighed the ingredients for making buns and were enabled to make good progress in understanding 'too much' and 'not enough'. This is not always the case. For example, in a game bouncing a ball on a parachute circle, opportunities were missed for children to record or tally the number of bounces they made; this meant that, although the activity was fun, it lacked sufficient focus and purpose.
- Staff check children's progress regularly, with a formal review each term. 'Learning Journey' folders are kept for each child which are shared with parents and which record children's achievements along with photographs and samples of their work.
- The school works productively with a range of other professionals to ensure good support for children who have special educational needs. This contributes well to their good progress.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Children are settled and secure in the nursery. They quickly get to know classroom routines, responding to signals at the end of sessions and knowing when it is time to move into their key worker groups. They tidy up enthusiastically at the end of the morning or afternoon and understand they must do this so the nursery is ready for the children who come to the next session.
- Children have a good, age-appropriate understanding of what are the right and the wrong things to do. Staff are positive role models and everyone is treated with care and respect.
- Children behave well, with very little squabbling or disagreements. They listen to and comply with instructions from the adults in the nursery. They are learning to share and take turns and always try their best to be kind to each other.
- Where they benefit from good teaching, children show very positive attitudes to learning and a real interest in finding out about new things. Occasionally, when they are not given sufficient direction or support in their learning, they lose interest and their concentration can be reduced; nonetheless, even when this is the case, they continue to behave well.
- The school provides sensitive care and support for children with additional learning, social, emotional and language needs and for children and families whose circumstances might make

them vulnerable. 'Joined-up' services within the federated schools ensure that there is continuity in the support provided for children as they move up to the infants school, illustrating a strong commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for every child.

- Most children attend regularly and parents make sure they arrive on time for the start of sessions. Nursery staff and leaders work hard to help families establish good attendance habits in time for when the children start school and staff work supportively with families who experience difficulties around regular attendance.
- Parents say that children who have attended the day care sessions for two-year-olds usually find transition to the nursery to be stress-free. Induction arrangements for all of the children are planned appropriately to ensure a smooth start in nursery. The close link with the federated infants school supports children's successful transition into the Reception class.

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

- The deputy headteacher of the federated schools has day-to-day responsibility for leading and managing the nursery, under the headteacher's overall direction. She and the headteacher work together closely, supported by all of the other practitioners in the school. Their firm commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for the children is shared by staff and governors.
- The federation's leaders undertook a staffing review during the last school year and a new structure came into effect in September 2013. Within the new structure some staff members, including the inclusion manager and the child and family well-being manager, work across both schools; this is helping to ensure consistency in practice, procedures and care for children's welfare.
- Improved arrangements are in place for checking on how well staff are performing and this is measured against the progress children make. A programme of regular staff training is helping to ensure that everyone's skills are continually being up-dated and improved. All of this has begun to enhance practitioners' ability to support children's learning and progress and this is reflected in the majority of teaching in the nursery. However, leaders know that there is still more to do to ensure that teaching across the nursery is consistently good or better and they are currently in the process of taking decisive actions to ensure this.
- Systems for tracking children's progress across the year have been revised and strengthened, with a formal review of progress every term and information shared with parents.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is realistic and accurate; they know where teaching is weaker and they have also correctly identified the need to continue to improve some staff members' skills in supporting children's literacy and numeracy. The school development plan identifies appropriate actions for raising children's achievement and improving the overall quality of teaching. Actions to address issues around less effective teaching are already taking place but there has not been time for them to fully take effect.
- The curriculum is kept under review to make sure that it is fresh and interesting for the children. Improvements have been made in developing effective ways of teaching the children about letters and sounds, for example, and this is contributing to on-going improvements in their learning and progress. The well-led Forest School curriculum adds great enhancement and enjoyment to the curriculum and is highly valued by staff, parents and children.
- The local authority provides regular advisory and consultant support to the nursery school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Supportive governors share the headteacher's determination to take the school forward. Governors have an improved understanding of children's achievement and of the quality of teaching and learning in the nursery. They know the nursery's strengths and areas for improvement and are aware of the improvement actions that are currently under way. They received detailed reports from nursery leaders. Governors contribute to managing staff performance and pay, ensuring that everyone is held to account for children's progress. Governors carry out their statutory duties effectively, ensuring that equal opportunities are promoted actively, that all children have every opportunity to take part in all nursery activities and that there is no discrimination.

## 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>	107593
<b>Local authority</b>	Kirklees
<b>Inspection number</b>	430888

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>	Geoff Hallas
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kirsten Luff
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 July 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01484 222202
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