

McMillan Nursery School

Railway Street, Nelson, Lancashire, BBP 9AG

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- From often very low starting points, children achieve exceptionally well from the time they join the nursery.
- The school provides excellent support for children who speak English as an additional language, more-able children, disabled children and those who have special educational needs. As a result, these groups make outstanding progress.
- Teaching is superb. Staff plan together daily and consider very carefully what children enjoy. This ensures amazing learning activities enthuse and excite children because they are based on their interests.
- The indoor spaces provide children with a high quality learning environment. Staff give a great deal of careful thought to the choice and variety of materials and equipment to support children's learning and play.
- The outdoor area contributes extremely well to children's learning and development. Staff use the woodland area very imaginatively to give children awe inspiring learning experiences.
- Children feel very safe in school and develop excellent attitudes to learning.
- Improving attendance is important to senior leaders. However, they do not yet check well enough how their actions are impacting on attendance rates.
- Behaviour is outstanding and children concentrate for very long periods of time and develop into confident, independent learners.
- The impressive curriculum includes a wide and imaginative range of visits which excite children and they become remarkable learners.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is given excellent attention.
- The headteacher is very ably supported by a well-qualified and dedicated staff team who work relentlessly to make sure that all children get the best possible start to their education.
- Together, the headteacher and the governing body have built on the many strengths in teaching and children's achievement found at the previous inspection. Their commitment to excellence makes sure that the school continues to improve. As a result, the McMillan has remained outstanding over a number of years.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a range of activities, including children when they were involved in play opportunities they had chosen themselves and 10 sessions when they were involved in small group activities led by teachers.
- The inspector spent time with individual children looking at books and their 'learning journeys'. These are records of their achievements during their time at the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body, a group of parents and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector considered 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 11 questionnaires completed by staff.
- A range of school documentation was scrutinised including the school improvement plan, the school's own assessment of how well it is doing, minutes of governing body meetings and the checks being made on the quality of teaching. The inspector also checked documentation on safeguarding, child protection, behaviour, attendance and health and safety.

Inspection team

Louise Murphy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized nursery and children join at the start of the term following their third birthday.
- The nursery school provides 110 part-time places for children in morning and afternoon sessions. There are currently 86 children on roll and the remaining places will be filled in January.
- Seventy per cent of children speak English as an additional language, which is much higher than average and approximately twenty per cent are at an early stage of learning English. Five different languages are spoken. Most of the children are from Asian or Eastern European heritage.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs supported at Early Years Action is currently below national average. The proportion of pupils supported through Early Years Action Plus is also currently below national average.
- The nursery school has close links with the children's centre and full-time nursery which share the same site and the neighbouring primary schools.
- The nursery school has gained the Race Equality Mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise children's achievement even more by making sure that actions put in place are having a positive impact on improving attendance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Most children start the nursery with skills and knowledge that vary between below and well below those typically expected for their age. They then benefit from high-quality teaching and a curriculum that is carefully planned to meet their needs. As a result they make excellent progress relative to their starting points and leave the nursery with skills that are much closer to the expected levels for their age group.
- The teaching and learning of phonics (matching letters and the sounds that they make) is excellent because it is part of the everyday routine of the school. Initially children are encouraged to recognise the letters and sounds that make up their own names and the names of their friends. This knowledge provides a firm basis for learning and children apply their skills to sound out words as they get older.
- Children enjoy reading. They talk confidently about what they see in the pictures. The comfortable reading area is always busy with staff and children sharing the wonder of books together. The enthusiasm for books is carried through into the small group key worker sessions, where children are almost bursting to get on with the story and join in with chanting the catchy phrases.
- An excellent range of resources encourage children to make marks in sand, foam, paint, dough and of course using pencils. These activities all look very appealing and tempt the children to have a go at early writing. All of the children observed engaging happily with these activities during the inspection showing incredibly good pencil grip and benefiting from a first-rate start to their writing career.
- Developing mathematical concepts is currently a priority for the school and teachers promote these skills very well throughout the day. For example, children enjoy identifying shapes in their activity and in the environment and counting the number of children that are present when the register is taken.
- Children who have English as an additional language make exceptional progress. This is partly due to the brilliant support of the bilingual teaching assistants who move fluently between languages to make sure that children understand everything that is taking place. Children talk together in their home language and confidently switch to speaking English.
- Children who attend regularly usually make the best progress and disabled children and those who have special educational needs have an excellent attendance rate which aids their progress considerably. They also achieve extremely well because their needs are recognised very quickly and effective support from staff and external agencies is put swiftly into place.
- The school provides a high level of challenge for more-able children with regular small group sessions that are matched closely to the next stage of their development. As a result, they make very good progress.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding and enables all to learn most effectively. A real strength in teaching is the superb knowledge all staff have about how young children develop. They plan activities on a daily basis to very carefully match each child's interests and the next steps in their learning. For example, one child showed a keenness for motorbikes and so a visit to a workshop was arranged and formed the basis of a range of exciting activities that children are still talking and getting very excited about.
- Teachers check thoroughly what children can do when they join the school including using information from parents about children's likes and dislikes. This means staff have an informed platform on which to start their assessment and record of children's progress. Key workers observe children's learning continually and carefully record their achievements. Staff use this information very well for future planning. This ensures high expectations and activities and

questions move learning along at a brisk pace.

- Children's learning journeys give a detailed account of the outstanding progress that they make. They are also a source of great pride to the children who love to discuss the things that they have done. Parents are kept well informed about how to support learning at home. They are encouraged to contribute to their child's learning journey to enable them to be fully involved in their learning.
- Activities inside and out are extremely imaginative and motivate children so that they want to learn. Adults, including teaching assistants, provide children with excellent opportunities to learn through discovery and exploring with their senses. For example, when working in the woodland area children are encouraged to feel the different textures within the environment, listen to the sounds, to smell each item and look very carefully at everything that surrounds them.
- The very well organised daily routines help children to settle and become independent learners. For example, children place their own photograph on a board to show they have arrived at nursery. They are expected to help with tidying up at the end of the session and it is amazing to watch children putting away resources and checking that work that they have completed is placed in the correct tray.
- Great importance is placed on developing children's love of reading. Teachers ensure there is a wide variety of books readily available around the nursery. Teachers insist children hold books correctly and make good use of the picture and letters and sounds to understand the story. Children take books home from the library to share with their parents on a regular basis. Children also have a book of their choice to keep at home once they have read a certain number of books and they really value this reward.
- Staff are adept at making sure that all children in their group are given the opportunity to join in with discussions and respond to the skilful questions that they ask. Children are also encouraged to chat together as they play. This helps to develop speaking and listening skills very well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children are particularly well-mannered and their behaviour is superb. They play, share, cooperate and take turns exceedingly well. School records show that this is typical behaviour and there are no records of bullying or racism.
- As there are so many exciting activities provided that fully engage children in their play falling out is rare and very quickly sorted if it does happen.
- Children have exceptionally trusting relationships with staff and understand that they are extremely well cared for. They also have a good range of opportunities to learn about safe behaviours. For example, in the woodland area children were very careful not to slip on the icy ground while they enthusiastically searched for hidden creatures. They also use computers, scissors and art resources safely.
- McMillan children show kindness to each other. They make sure that children who cannot speak for themselves are joining in with activities and get their fair share of fruit and other snacks. Even at this young age, children have an exceptional understanding of right and wrong and the behaviour expected of them.
- Systems have been put in place to encourage regular attendance. For example, on the first day of absence the family receives a call or text message from the nursery. A proportion of the parents of children with full attendance for one term are presented with flowers and attendance figures are celebrated in the newsletter. However, not all parents respond as positively to the school's actions to improve attendance and a few children do not always attend regularly.
- Transition arrangements are very effective. Key workers visit children at home before they start nursery and children are invited in for taster sessions. Reception class teachers visit the nursery to meet the children who will be attending their school. Children also get the opportunity to visit their new school with their key person when the school is close enough to walk to. All of these routines help the children to seamlessly move on to the next steps in their education.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is ambitious and fully successful in her drive for continued school improvement. As a result, the nursery is exceptionally well led and managed.
- Staff morale is extremely high and staff questionnaires show that they are very proud to be working at the nursery and wholly supportive of the headteacher.
- The school's view of its own performance is accurate. Senior leaders have a detailed knowledge of the nursery's strengths and areas for development. As a result, the school improvement plan is sharply focused and identifies precise actions to build on the sustained success of the nursery.
- Arrangements for checking on the quality of teaching are varied, regular and robust. Training needs are quickly identified and there is a determined commitment to making sure that the skills and knowledge of all staff are continually updated.
- The headteacher and staff keep a very close eye on how well children are doing. They quickly recognise if a child is falling behind or has any additional needs, effective strategies are then put in place to address any issue. This timely, excellent practice, successfully promotes equality of opportunity.
- The curriculum provides many brilliant activities to appeal to children's interests and enrich their experiences. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is successfully developed and enhanced by the celebration of festivals and thrilling trips to other places.
- The nursery works tremendously well in partnership with parents. Parents are encouraged to join staff in planning activities for their children and to attend 'stay and play', both sessions run on a weekly basis.
- Although the nursery has a range of systems in place to improve attendance a record of the impact is not kept. Consequently, the school is not fully aware whether attendance is improving as a result of their actions.
- The local authority provides 'light touch' support to this outstanding nursery.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly supportive of the school and effectively hold senior leaders to account for the performance of staff and children. They are very well informed about children's progress and the quality of teaching because they visit the school regularly, sometimes taking part in 'stay and play' sessions. Governors check that teachers' salary progression is linked to children's progress. The governing body has a secure understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development. Governors are also keen to take part in any training that will help further improve their skills and carry out their duties. Statutory safeguarding duties are carried out effectively and the budget is managed efficiently.

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	119095
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	426062

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Wicks
Headteacher	Gillian Wroe
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2010
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