

Oxclose Nursery School

Oxclose Crescent, Spennymoor, County Durham, DL16 6RU

Inspection dates 27–28 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.

- Parents hold this school in high esteem. They fully recognise the wealth of opportunities provided for their children. One view, typical of many received, says that staff 'know each character to perfection' and 'really personalise the learning experience for each child'.
- From different starting points, children make excellent progress in all areas of learning because of well-directed care and support.
- By the time children are ready to move on to Reception classes, all securely attain the levels expected for their age. Many achieve at levels above this. Attainment in reading is not quite as high as that achieved in writing.
- Teaching is outstanding. Staff constantly reflect upon their observations of what individual children show they can do. From this, they determine how to move learning quickly on to the next step.
- Improvements to the outside area have created an exciting and challenging environment in which children delight as they explore and investigate becoming increasingly independent as they develop their excellent physical skills.
- Assessment of how well children perform is an integral part of the day's work. Detailed analysis of how well each child is progressing informs their next steps in learning.
- Behaviour and safety are excellent. Children are encouraged to take measured risks as they gain confidence learning to jump and swing at a local soft gym and to use different tools safely.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to learning. In school, and with schools across Europe, children are encouraged to share their experiences, play in harmony and care for each other.
- The complete dedication of the visionary headteacher is shared by staff and governors. Leaders, managers and staff work tirelessly together to provide the best learning experiences they can offer. This team effort is highly effective and ensures that high quality of teaching provides high quality learning experiences.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector over two days. The inspector visited eight learning sessions or parts of sessions. The headteacher took part in two joint observations with the inspector.
- Separate discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The opinions of 11 members of staff were also considered from their questionnaire responses.
- The inspector observed the school's work, looked at children's learning journals, data on children's progress, planning and monitoring documentation and information relating to the welfare of children and safeguarding.
- The inspector considered 13 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). She took account of the results of the school's own questionnaire to parents, as well as a letter from a parent and discussions with parents throughout the two days of inspection.

Inspection team

Kate Pringle, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This nursery school offers provision for 79 part-time places. Opportunities for additional places, privately financed, can be made in agreement with the school.
- Most children access nursery provision when they are three-years old and transfer to Reception classes in neighbouring schools in the term before their fifth birthday.
- Children are of White British heritage.
- About a quarter of children are supported at Early Years school action with speech and communication difficulties.
- Few children are supported at Early Years schools action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The nursery shares the site with a local primary school.
- The school plays a consultative role within the local authority to demonstrate good practice.
- The school has a number of links with schools across Europe to extend knowledge and understanding of different communities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in reading to equal that achieved in writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children enter nursery with starting points that are largely below and, for many, well below expectations for their age. By the time they move on to Reception classes in a range of neighbouring primary schools, all reach the expected levels for their age and a good proportion attain at higher than expected levels.
- The initial focus upon developing children's personal and social skills places them well for future learning. They are encouraged to make choices about where to play and learn and consequently they learn to share and take turns. They gain independence and confidence rapidly, showing little insecurity as they widen their learning experiences, especially in the outdoor garden where they spend a lot of time.
- Staff spend a lot of time in conversation with children. They encourage the development of language through well-judged discussions and conversations and by providing opportunities for children to consider situations and explain their thoughts and ideas. Excellent resources and the different learning areas provide wonderful situations where children can engage in role play, solve problems and use their imagination.
- Those children who are disabled or who have special educational needs, and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, have additional support. In this school, such needs largely concern difficulties in speaking and listening. Well-structured programmes for small groups or individuals ensure that these children make rapid progress, often exceeding the progress of other children in these aspects of learning. This increases their self-confidence and enables them to engage better with other children so that they make similar progress to other children over the whole curriculum.
- Most recently, work to develop children's writing skills has been very effective. Children make marks using a range of pens, crayons, felt pens and chalks. At the time of inspection, most could recognise their name and many write their name using the initial letter. Progress in reading is at least good and the setting has lots of opportunities for children to recognise that words have meaning. Staff recognise that the opportunity to link letters and sounds to make words could be introduced sooner and plans are already in place to begin this 'phonic' work sooner for those children who are ready.
- Opportunities for children to develop their physical and creative skills are excellent. Children build strength, coordination and balance through a wide range of activities. They cut and stick wrapping presents for Christmas; mix their own play dough to roll and shape, and collect soil, water, gravel and leaves to 'cook' with in the mud kitchen. The outdoor garden enables them to scramble, build and run with purpose as they engage in imaginative play on the pirate ship, in the castle or in the secret garden. A weekly visit to a soft gym provides a completely different, enjoyable and unique experience for children as they learn to leap and swing into the air with confidence.
- Staff constantly refer to counting, shapes and different measures, encouraging children to use their number skills throughout the school day. Children consider how high their wall is, count spoonfuls of flour for their dough and make sure there are enough bottles of milk for everyone in their group. Children accurately correspond one item with one number; they see the necessity to half apples so everyone gets a piece and consider questions of more and less confidently.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Highly successful teamwork means that the quality of teaching is excellent. Learning is exceptional because of the daily observations made of what children are able to do. This enables staff to prepare the next programmes in learning, varying resources and activities to excite children's interest.
- Children make their way into their groups on arrival. After parents depart, children begin focused

sessions in which they engage in different activities according to their ages and abilities. As they begin their chosen activities, staff encourage children to consider what they are doing and talk through their experiences with key workers who listen and respond to children, model ways to explain and introduce new vocabulary.

- For instance, outside a couple of boys were playing with large spools. They rolled them this way and that about the various pathways. A careful question about what would happen if they took the spools up the hill and let them go stimulated one of the boys to do just that. He ran after the spool as it gained speed and chattered excitedly about how much faster it went. Questions from the key worker helped him to consider why there was such an increase in speed compared to other pathways in the garden.
- Children show high levels of concentration as they play and learn both inside and outdoors. They listen carefully to the voice from the computer and use the mouse to click and drag objects across the screen. They join in songs like the 'Wheels on the Bus' improving their pen control as they make marks, round and round, up and down, for example. Outside they spend long periods of time cooking in the mud kitchen as they collect soil, twigs, leaves and gravel to mix together. They independently access the pump and carry water across the garden to use in their concoctions. Children's dedication to their chosen activities improves the progress they make in their learning.
- Talking is central to learning and staff provide each child with the individual support they need to develop their language and communication. Staff probe children's understanding and ask just the right questions to encourage thinking about how and why and what will happen if. For those children who have difficulties in speaking and listening, individualised programmes support learning at just the right level to improve diction, extend sentences from one word expressions to full sentences and help children to listen and respond. This support ensures that, by the time they leave nursery, children are able to participate fully in discussions with their friends.
- Tracking of children's progress takes a number of forms all of which provide staff with the information they need to drive learning forward. Discussions enable all staff to understand the differing needs of children and decisions are taken about where further support is needed or greater challenge is required. Learning journals for parents indicate how well children are progressing and provide a full record of their achievements. Next steps in learning are fed straight into teachers' plans to ensure children progress rapidly.
- Parents are delighted at the progress their children make. They are supported well through a range of workshops which help them to understand how their children are taught. They say that staff are always available to help them help their children learn, or to talk to when they have concerns. All agree that any concerns are quickly acted upon.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Parents are unanimous that their children are safe, happy and love coming to school. There is no evidence of any bullying and children are taught to care for and look after each other. The evidence from inspection supports this view.
- Attendance overall is good although at the time of inspection there were a number of absences because of coughs and colds.
- Children learn to be independent and make every effort to put on their own waterproofs and boots when they go out to play in the garden. They learn about being responsible as they help staff to give out milk and fruit and help to tidy up inside and out of doors. They independently use the toilet and understand the need to wash their hands afterwards and before eating.
- Staff understand the need for children to understand what risks are and how to keep safe. They provide ample opportunities for children to meet challenges, always ensuring that appropriate support is present. This was very evident in the soft gym where children showed great confidence within a vast space. Staff understood the limitations of children's skills and encouraged each one to climb, to complete a forward roll down an incline, to run and leap into the soft pit or to swing and let go dropping safely in to a mass of foam. Staff are always ready

to support and encourage and this has considerable impact upon their confidence and self-esteem.

- Within the nursery, a similar ethos of support encourages children to work safely with a range of tools using scissors to cut different materials and garden tools to dig and plant in the garden.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- This school does extremely well to maintain the high quality of previous inspections. The headteacher leads with vision. She is wholly committed to providing a high-quality learning environment and is supported by an equally dedicated staff.
- There is clear determination to secure the best achievement possible for each child and real equality of opportunity with all children making similarly excellent progress. Rigorous tracking of individual children's successes and needs are shared and specific support is well targeted. Staff adapt programmes to accommodate needs on a daily basis.
- School self-evaluation is accurate and based upon regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching. Staff play an active role in recognising the changing needs of the school, and its children, as they identify the different resources and training needs to continually improve the ways in which children learn. The system to manage the performance of staff is well established and performance is linked to salary progression.
- The curriculum has been developed to help young children become confident and independent learners. Staff work with a common purpose to develop opportunities and activities which encourage children to be creative and reflective. The promotion of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness permeates all aspects of learning. Children learn to understand the difference between right and wrong and to care for their friends. The exceptional programme set up with schools across Europe gives children lovely opportunities to learn about the way other children live and celebrate festivals. Videos, letters and pictures about what the children do in the nursery are shared with these distant schools. Staff and governors gain from their visits abroad as they evaluate different ways of learning.
- Parents are welcomed and every effort is made for them to celebrate their children's successes. They are justly proud of the nursery and are highly positive about every aspect of school life. They are particularly pleased about the experiences given to their children from the visitors to school and to the various visits around the town and further afield. Many speak of the confidence and independence their children gain, and of the benefits of the discussions they have with their children's key workers.
- The school has a very good relationship with the local authority who signpost the school as an exemplar of excellent practice within the county. The school adviser works regularly with the school providing additional challenges to leaders and managers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is strong. Excellent knowledge and understanding of education and rigorous challenge to school leaders help this nursery to maintain its high standards. There is a very good awareness of where strengths lie and what needs to be done to further improvement. Governors have individual roles and they regularly monitor and evaluate their responsibilities to sustain best practice. Understanding of the school self-evaluation is excellent and development plans are rigorously scrutinised and challenged to ensure they have high quality impact upon teaching and learning. A sharp eye is kept upon all finances and good performance is appropriately rewarded. The school-financed apprenticeships provide the nursery with additional support and enable young people to establish careers in childcare. Safeguarding practices are thorough, very well documented and monitored and more than meet statutory requirements.

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	113973
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	425906

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	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Ogden
Headteacher	Jayne Smith
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2011
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