

Arlesey Nursery School and Childcare Centre

High Street, Arlesey, SG15 6SL

Inspection dates

12–13 December 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children make good progress from below expected starting points and achieve well while they are in the nursery.
- Children enjoy their time in the nursery and join in activities readily. They behave well and know how to keep themselves safe.
- The teaching of letters and sounds is good and children are making good progress in developing early literacy skills.
- Adults maintain a friendly and safe environment. They are encouraging and relationships are consistently warm and positive.
- Children are taught well because staff ensure that activities are interesting and engaging.
- The school provides effective support for disabled children and those with special educational needs. As a result, they make considerable progress and become confident learners.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, have a sound understanding of the main strengths and areas for development.
- Close links with the main lower school to which children transfer have a very positive effect on children's smooth transition to school.
- The headteacher and assistant headteacher are providing very effective interim leadership of the nursery.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Staff do not give children opportunities to practise and develop early numeracy skills together.
- A few tasks and activities are too easy for the most-able children.
- Information about how well children are doing is not routinely organised and used consistently to plan next steps in their learning.
- The roles of staff with responsibility for improving teaching and children's progress are not fully developed.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed children learning in a wide range of activities, including activities children had chosen for themselves and small group work led by adults. Eight learning sessions were observed; several of these jointly with the headteacher and assistant headteacher. The inspector spoke with children about their learning and also looked at lunchtime arrangements.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at progress and attainment data, the school's development plan, curriculum plans, documentation from the governing body, notes on the checks made on the quality of teaching, arrangements for safeguarding and the promotion of attendance, as well as some of the children's 'learning journeys'.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of staff with specific responsibilities and representatives of the governing body. The inspector spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 15 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and the results of the school's consultation with parents. The inspector spoke to a number of parents and carers who stayed to see their children settle into the nursery, as well as meeting with parents and carers who also contributed their views.
- Questionnaires completed by nine members of the school staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The nursery is smaller than average and provides part-time and full time places for children in morning and afternoon sessions.
- The nursery has three intakes of children each year. Few children stay at the nursery for more than a year. Most start when they are just three years of age, and leave at the age of four.
- They are able to attend on a fully flexible basis, either in the morning, the afternoon or a mix of both and some also stay for lunch.
- The large majority of children in the nursery are of White British heritage, with a minority of children from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. A very small number of children speak English as an additional language. The proportion varies from year to year.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs who are supported through Early Years Action is in line with that found in most schools. The proportion supported at Early Years Action Plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below that found in schools nationally.
- Extended care is provided at the beginning and end of the school day by the childcare centre. The childcare centre and the provision for children under three years of age, both share the school site and are the subject of separate inspection arrangements.
- The nursery school headteacher resigned at the end of the summer term.
- In September 2013 the headteacher and assistant headteacher of the adjacent lower school took over the management of the nursery school. They are providing full-time interim leadership and management of the nursery school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding and ensure that it has an even greater impact on children's learning and progress by:
 - providing more regular extended opportunities for children to work together to accelerate their progress in early numeracy skills
 - making sure that tasks and activities challenge children, especially the more able
 - routinely analysing checks on children's progress and using this information to plan their next steps in development.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that staff with leadership roles are more fully involved in checking the quality of teaching and children's progress so they can drive improvement in their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge at levels that are below those expected for their age. All children make good progress and the skills of many are in line with those expected when they enter Reception, with some exceeding the expected levels for their age.
- Staff make a special effort to get to know each child and their parents and carers so that they can help every individual to enjoy learning and achieve well. Parents and carers appreciate this, especially the home visits and the daily opportunities to talk about their individual children with staff.
- Children make particularly good progress in personal and social development. They settle quickly at the start of the day and immediately find friends and enjoyable activities to learn, sometimes without direct adult help.
- All groups of children achieve well, including those for whom English is an additional language, disabled children, those with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for free school meals. Staff work well with outside agencies and parents to make sure children's needs are met.
- Children make excellent progress in their physical development. They show confidence and skill in handling small equipment such as paint brushes and scissors. Outdoors they are very active and confident when climbing, balancing and riding bikes. Children develop their number skills as they sing counting rhymes and play counting games.
- 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's achievement in early reading and writing skills have improved since the last inspection because adults have focused on developing these skills. Children enjoy making marks in the outdoor area and as part of indoor activities. They were confidently writing their Christmas cards to friends and family before carefully fitting them into envelopes and posting them with great delight.
- The development of early literacy skills is very good. Children's awareness of the sounds that letters make is extended in well planned small-group work as they are encouraged to think of, and make, different sounds matched to the letters as they are written. Although children make good progress overall in their early mathematical skills there are not enough regular opportunities to practise and extend these skills in planned small group activities.
- The school's improved assessment and tracking systems help staff to identify any gaps in children's learning. However, this information is not routinely analysed in order to consistently plan next steps for learning. A few activities and tasks do not always extend learning, particularly of the most-able children.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Children are motivated and engaged in their learning because staff provide a broad range of interesting activities that follow children's interests and experiences. Good use of praise and

encouragement effectively promotes children's self-esteem and confidence.

- Adults establish very positive relationships with children and place importance on encouraging them to make sensible choices. They make resources accessible so children are able to make decisions about what equipment to use, or what area of the nursery that they want to experience, indoors or out.
- Children work, play and share well together. They are developing a good sense of fairness and enjoy working together cooperatively. Group time, snack and lunch times have a positive impact on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Children show good concentration, and develop a range of skills as, for instance, when they use play dough that they have made to make models, which they then decorate and make marks to label or learn to take their turns with sticky tape as they wrap parcels of different sizes and shapes.
- 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 observations of learning inform 'learning journey' books which contain a wide range of assessments and observations as well as samples of work. This knowledge of children's abilities is used to provide children with a good balance of activities. They ensure that small-group activities to develop children's learning about rhyme, letter sounds are planned to match the ability of the group.
- Although children make good progress, the learning of the most-able is not developed to the full. Occasionally, staff are not focused enough on teaching children the skills that follow on from what they have already learnt. Some staff put too much emphasis on activities that children choose for themselves which lack the structure required to promote more rapid progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Children clearly enjoy coming to the Nursery and behaviour is typically good. They are very familiar with the routines and are very secure in the warm, positive relationships they have with staff. Children's behaviour is managed extremely well. They trust the staff completely, as do their parents and carers.
- Through home visits, and staff and parents and carers work in close cooperation to help children overcome any problems they might have and settle quickly. Staff provide high quality one-to-one support for children who find managing their own behaviour more difficult and this has a positive impact.
- Children move around the nursery in a sensible manner, treating objects and people with care. They co-operate very well with each other as they play in the water tray and share resources such as when playing with the nativity scene or wrapping up different shaped parcels to go under the Christmas tree.
- The school's policies and procedures are clear and support the children's safety effectively. Children show a very well-developed awareness of safety in both indoor and outdoor areas. They use both areas and tools such as scissors, hammers and climbing equipment safely.
- Children are well aware of the importance of being kind to one another and have confidence in

adults to help deal with any upsets. Occasionally, children need to be reminded about the behaviour that is expected, for example when they are not fully engaged in an activity. There are no recent records of poor behaviour, although clear procedures exist to record it if any should occur.

- Strong partnerships with relevant services ensure that children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are kept safe.
- The responses to the school questionnaires and inspector discussions with parents reflected their agreement that the school keeps their children extremely safe.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, assistant headteacher, senior leaders and governors are committed to promoting further improvement in the school. There have been notable improvements since the last inspection in children's progress in early reading and writing.
- Arrangements for children starting school are very effective and all children quickly settle. Home visits help staff to quickly become familiar with children, their likes and dislikes, and pre-school learning, and with their family circumstances.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and improvement planning has an appropriate focus on the important issues for development. Systems are in place to monitor the performance of staff, and these are appropriately linked to training. However, the roles of staff with responsibility for particular aspects of the school's work are still being developed. As a result they do not, as yet, play a full part in supporting the drive for improvement through, for example, checks of the impact of teaching on children's learning.
- Even so, good leadership at all levels is reflected in the assessments of the progress children make and the good quality of teaching. However, as many staff have worked closely together for some time, they sometimes find it difficult to stand back from events and rigorously check what is being provided. This leads occasionally to too much emphasis on activities that children choose for themselves at the expense of extended adult-led tasks that develop children's skills in key areas. This is occasionally reflected in less effective teaching.
- The school promotes children's equality of opportunity well. Difference is celebrated and very positive relationships exist with parents and children. This has a good impact on children's confidence and on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new system for tracking children's progress which is still developing. Assessment information is collected on the progress children make, but this is not always analysed closely enough. Staff are not always confident in using such information to identify what improvements could be made in teaching and learning or to amend activities so that learning can be extended, particularly for those most able.
- Parents are highly appreciative of the Nursery. They praise the commitment and warm approachability of staff and comment on the good progress their children.
- The local authority has provided light-touch support in recent years.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and of the school's data through regular written reports from the headteacher, discussions with staff and visits to the nursery. Governors have undertaken training to ensure that they develop their skills. This has had a positive impact on their ability to question, challenge and hold the school leaders to account. The governing body is familiar with the quality of teaching in the school and supports school leaders in managing teachers' performance. They help to ensure that pay matches performance. Governors 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. In the current time of uncertainty over local authority changes to funding and the appointment of interim leadership, they have been active in questioning and discussing these changes to prepare the school to move forward in the best possible way. Governors are fully involved in development planning and work well with the headteacher and assistant headteacher to drive improvements forward. Documentation relating to safeguarding is well organised and statutory requirements are met.

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	109424
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	425342

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	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr. Samantha Ward
Headteacher	Derek Archer
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2011
Telephone number	01462 732168
Fax number	N/A
Email address	arlesey@cbc.beds.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

