

Millfield Community Nursery School

Bell Street, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR4 6JR

Inspection dates

17–18 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Safeguarding is inadequate because leaders do not check that accidents are reported accurately and that effective action is taken to reduce the number of incidents.
- Teaching and achievement are inadequate. This is because information about children's development is not recorded well enough and this makes it difficult for staff to plan new learning.
- Children with special educational needs are not identified accurately. Consequently, these children make inadequate progress. The provision has not been monitored well enough to ensure it provides the right support for individual children.
- Attendance is low and declining and children miss too much learning time. Staff have not engaged all parents to achieve better attendance.
- Leaders do not do enough to improve teaching. The checks made by leaders and the governing body on the progress made by different groups of children are inadequate. Leaders also have an inaccurate view of how much progress children are making.
- Leaders do not have enough links with other schools to check that their own view of the school's performance is accurate.
- Too many staff have low morale and little confidence in the school's leaders. They told the inspector they are not supported to improve their teaching.
- Governors have not held the headteacher to account for children's learning and development. They have not improved the school by addressing the areas for improvement from the previous inspection.

The school has the following strengths

- Children follow routines and engage well with adults and one another. They are developing good manners.
- The indoor and outdoor areas are attractive and well resourced.
- Relationships between adults and children, and between children, are good.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning and teaching in three nursery sessions and spoke to children. Some teaching was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, and three members of the governing body including the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body. Other meetings were held with members of staff and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents including risk assessments and accident records and children's learning journals. He also looked at school records of the quality of teaching, records of staff targets and training, self-evaluation and the school's improvement plans.
- There were no responses available to the online Parent View survey at the time of the inspection. The inspector spoke informally to a number of parents.
- The inspector considered responses to the 9 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Kevin Dodd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized nursery school.
- The nursery offers flexible attendance and many families take up this option. Some families also pay for extra childcare over and above their 15 funded hours.
- The proportion of children supported through Early Action, Early Action Plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The majority of children are from White British backgrounds. The Nursery has a significant number (15%) of families from Black minority ethnic groups.
- The Nursery has links with other schools through a strategic partnership with Shiremoor Teaching School.
- The senior teacher was on long term leave of absence during the inspection.
- There is onsite childcare managed by the governing body and children from three months to the age of four years use this provision throughout the year. There is a service-level agreement in place for the school to provide day care for the children's centre. Both of these provisions were not inspected as part of this inspection; however, the most recent reports for both can be found on the Ofsted website.
- The school was awarded a Positive Relationships Charter in 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- As a matter of urgency, take steps to reduce the number of accidents by ensuring that incidents are recorded accurately and action is taken to avoid reoccurrence.
- Improve the quality of teaching and children's achievement so that they are at least good by:
 - ensuring that children's development is assessed and recorded accurately to identify next steps of learning that build upon children's knowledge and skills
 - planning activities to meet the needs of the different groups of children
 - putting into place procedures for identifying children's special educational needs and establishing the correct programmes of support
 - providing opportunities for staff to observe teaching and learning in an outstanding nursery school and reflect on their own teaching through coaching and mentoring.
- Improve children's attendance by:
 - analysing attendance rates, especially among children who attend afternoon sessions
 - working more closely with parents to establish better attendance routines.
- Improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders listen to, consult and involve staff more in the development of the school through gathering feedback from staff about the work of the school and making sure staff

- understand decisions that are made
- ensuring teaching and learning are monitored more rigorously and that feedback to staff about how to improve their teaching and children’s learning is clear
- ensuring that sufficient time during staff training and leadership meetings is spent discussing how to improve teaching and learning and evaluating the impact of training provided on teaching and learning
- establishing links with outstanding nursery schools to support leaders in improving the work of Millfield Community Nursery School
- ensuring that leaders and the governing body understand what progress to expect of three- and four-year-olds and that they evaluate the progress made by different groups of children during their time at the school
- improving the governing body’s knowledge of the Nursery’s work, its strengths and weaknesses so they can hold leaders to account for their performance
- undertaking an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Children do not achieve well enough from their starting points because of weaknesses in teaching and the systems for checking how well they are doing. Leaders are not clear enough about what groups of children are capable of when they start in the school and how much progress they have made by the time they leave. They do not promote equality of opportunity.
- The progress of children with special educational needs, as shown in the school's own data, is inadequate. This is because these children's needs have not been accurately identified and work is not matched well enough to help them make enough progress.
- The school's information on the progress of the most able children and those from Black minority ethnic backgrounds is not analysed. Inspection evidence indicates progress for these groups is too variable, as their needs are not adequately planned for.
- The activities planned for different groups are imaginative and children enjoy their learning. Staff recognise that children have weaker skills in writing than in most other areas of their development; however, they do not build well enough upon earlier learning to support children's development. The information needed to measure children's progress and plan the next steps in their learning is not gathered consistently or used effectively. Children's skills in expressive arts and design are weak.
- Children are curious about the environment and are interested in the world about them. Good use is made of the garden area to help children become keen investigators as, for instance, when they hunt for small animals.
- Children enjoy rhymes, listening to stories and looking at the good range of books available. Staff make good use of opportunities to help children to be aware of print on labels and signs.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate. This is because information about children's progress is inaccurate. Too much time is wasted collecting information at the expense of using what is collected to check whether all groups are learning well enough.
- Children's achievements are not recorded precisely to identify the needs of particular groups; planning of activities does not indicate the next steps of learning to make sure learning is sufficiently challenging and meets the needs of all children.
- Staff do not ensure the accuracy of the children's 'learning journeys' and progress records, which leads to misunderstandings of how well individual children are developing.
- For the majority of their day in school, children have a good length of time to become involved in their learning, both indoors and outdoors. This means that they can explore, find out and experiment. However, because planning is weak, staff interventions are not effective in supporting all children to learn effectively and get the most out of their time at the school.
- Staff support children using questions to deepen children's thinking through talk. For example, an early years practitioner supporting children who were collecting tree decorations outdoors listened carefully as they counted the decorations collected and challenged them to prove they had counted correctly. Her comments helped the children to count again and notice their mistake in counting one object twice.
- Off-site trips and celebrations of festivals such as Christmas and Mother's and Father's days support children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development adequately. Stories are used appropriately as a means of introducing new learning, such as about helping others.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Children's enthusiasm for learning does not always help them make the progress of which they are capable over time. This is particularly evident for children with special educational needs because their particular needs are not identified well enough.
- While attendance is not compulsory for this age group, the current level of attendance is low at around 85% for children attending morning sessions and 81% for the afternoon; this represents a decline since last year. The school does try to promote the habit of coming to school promptly and regularly as important, but as yet with insufficient impact. Absences or regular lateness are, however, followed up carefully.
- Staff take a genuine interest in the children. This is helped by the supportive relationships between them and the children, who generally were seen to behave well due to this caring and consistent approach. However, the school does not use information about children's progress and observations of lessons well enough to check on the quality of children's behaviour over time.
- Children are willing to help in school and staff involve them well. For example, children help prepare for snack and lunchtimes and they tidy the classroom at the end of the session.
- Even though leaders do not take effective action to reduce the number of accidents children are involved in, children are starting to learn how to take sensible risks in their play and how to stay healthy by washing their hands. There is no record of discrimination or bullying between children. This is because the school places appropriate emphasis upon children being friendly to one another and mixing well.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Safeguarding does not meet requirements because leaders do not ensure accidents are recorded accurately and effective action is not taken to analyse rigorously the causes in order to reduce risks and avoid reoccurrences.
- The leadership of teaching is inadequate. Records of the headteacher's observations of teaching are too infrequent and contain generalised comments rather than evaluating whether the teaching is improving children's learning. Observations of teaching do not give leaders a realistic view of what learning is typically like in the school. Too many staff say that the feedback from lesson observations does not help them to improve their teaching.
- The management of staff performance through setting individual objectives for teachers and early years practitioners is inadequate. This is because targets are not appropriately linked to learning and teaching nor are they specific, measurable and achievable. Levels of teachers' pay are not matched by the quality of their teaching, because their teaching has been judged too generously.
- Weak aspects of learning and teaching are not recognised and so are not being challenged by leaders. This is because not enough time during staff training and leadership meetings is spent on improving teaching and learning.
- Too many staff told the inspector that training, including that provided by the school, is having a limited impact upon their teaching. The impact of training on teaching and learning is not checked by leaders to make sure it is effective.
- Staff lack confidence in the leadership of the school. They are anxious and morale is low because decisions about assessing children's achievements and timetabling for children and staff are not managed well by leaders. Staff want the school to improve but weaknesses in how they are challenged, trained and supported are making this difficult to achieve.
- Leaders do not check the progress of groups of children well enough. This means that leaders do not have an accurate view of the school's performance.
- The leadership and management of the provision for children with special educational needs are ineffective. The newly appointed leader has found record keeping to be disorganised and inaccuracies in systems for checking children's progress. However, a start has been made to

improve matters.

- Support from the local authority has been 'light touch'. Most recently, this has been to support the new special educational needs leader. Leaders have not made good enough use of expertise from outside the school to judge the quality of teaching in order to challenge their own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning has declined since the previous inspection and leaders and the governing body have not recognised this.
- Parents are broadly supportive of the school but are not provided with sufficient information about their children's progress nor involved sufficiently in their children's learning. The school website for parents is not up to date. The school does not work closely enough with all parents to help them understand how important it is for their children to attend everyday to help them learn and prepare for full-time education.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is committed to seeing the school improve but does not make sufficient checks on the work of senior leaders. Governors ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for the performance management of the headteacher but have not ensured safeguarding requirements are met. They undertake training for their roles and discuss financial matters regularly. However, members of the governing body are too dependent upon the headteacher for their understanding of the quality of teaching, progress by groups of children or teachers' pay. Their view of the school is over-optimistic and they do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of what the school needs to do to become better. Members of the governing body are unaware of the decline in the school's effectiveness since the previous inspection, or that staff have low morale and limited confidence in the leadership of the school.

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	108745
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	429958

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	0–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Hudson
Headteacher	Anne Gunning
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2012
Telephone number	0191 553 2775
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