

Maidenhead Nursery School

School Lane, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 7PG

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Children make outstanding progress in developing their personal, communication and physical skills regardless of their background, home language or ability.
- The headteachers set high expectations and are inspirational leaders. Together with governors and staff, they have a clear vision for excellence. They continually improve practice by working together and being innovative.
- The Nursery is a joyful place because it provides a wonderful rich environment where children develop their love of learning.
- The teaching of early literacy and numeracy is exceptional. It is seamlessly woven into imaginative play as well as when children are being taught in small groups.
- Staff know the children very well and have exceptional skills in adjusting their approaches to meet the needs of all pupils, including those who are more able or who are disabled or who have special educational needs.
- Children behave exceptionally well because they are so absorbed in what they are doing. They play remarkably well together. Parents and carers are delighted with how quickly their children settle and enjoy coming to the Nursery.
- The federation provides excellent opportunities for senior leaders to develop and hone their leadership skills across the schools in the federation. Strong systems for enabling teachers to share practice are having an excellent impact on promoting the consistency of high quality teaching.
- Middle leadership is developing well across the federation but is not yet fully developed for understanding the world. Occasionally, staff miss opportunities for deepening children's understanding of physical science.
- Governors provide outstanding support and have been instrumental in helping to raise the school's level of effectiveness.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 13 learning sessions provided by teachers and by Early Years support staff assisting children in their learning. Some of these sessions were joint observations with one of the headteachers.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior leaders, teachers and a local authority representative.
- Some of the Nursery school's documentation was scrutinised. This included teachers' planning and safeguarding procedures, along with children's work and data on children's attainment and progress.
- The inspector considered the 16 responses to the online Parent View survey, the Nursery school's own, most recent parents' questionnaire and a few letters from parents and carers. She also held informal conversations with several parents and carers.
- The inspector considered responses to the 10 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Eileen Chadwick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Maidenhead Nursery is an average sized nursery school. Children enter in the term after their third birthday and leave to enter primary school in the September following their fourth birthday. Consequently, some spend five terms in the Nursery school and others three or four terms. Most children attend in the morning or afternoon for five days each week although the provision is flexible and a few stay for morning and afternoon sessions for three days each week
- Some parents and carers pay for extended hours and a few children attend one or more additional sessions. Children are also able to attend the lunch club.
- Approximately a half come from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is above average. The largest groups are White British, Pakistani and Eastern European although there are many others.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs supported through Early Years action is average. The proportion supported at Early Years action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportions of children known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority are average. However, at the time of the inspection, children of nursery age were not supported by pupil premium funding (additional funding provided for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families).
- In May 2012, the school became federated with Cookham Nursery School and The Lawns Nursery School, Windsor. Since then, the three schools have been led by two co-headteachers and share the same governing body.
- The assistant headteacher leads Maidenhead Nursery School when the headteachers are working in their other schools.
- Maidenhead is a 'Schools Direct' school which provides a school-led training path for graduates to gain qualified teacher status.
- The schools in the federation are working towards National Teaching School status and have received a government grant for this purpose (National Teaching Schools are outstanding schools which play a leading role in the training and professional development of teachers, support staff and headteachers).
- There is a designated satellite of The North Town Maidenhead Children's Centre Hub on the school site. The children's centre provision is separately managed and was not inspected at this time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop middle leadership for understanding of the world across the federation and ensure Nursery staff make the most of opportunities for enhancing children's understanding of physical science.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children begin the Nursery with knowledge and skills which, overall, are below those expected for their age. Children of all abilities and backgrounds make outstanding progress during their time in the Nursery and leave to enter Reception classes with levels that are at least in line with expectations and a good number exceed this.
- The Nursery is highly successful at ensuring all children have an equal chance of doing well. The very high quality learning opportunities provide an excellent range of activities so that all children, including the most able, are extended in their learning.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress. This is because they are given excellent support by adults when teaching them individually and helping them to learn in small groups. The school makes excellent use of outside agencies to support those who have specific learning needs.
- Children make accelerated progress in their personal, social and emotional development and this underpins their successful learning. They settle very quickly because of the way in which adults tailor support to help each child adjust to the Nursery. Children develop high levels of confidence, show exceptionally good skills in building good relationships with others and become absorbed in the activities provided.
- Children develop their spoken language exceptionally well. They confidently express their thoughts and learn to articulate their needs extremely well. Those who are learning to speak English as an additional language make excellent progress in communication, eagerly talking about what they are doing, for example naming different toy animals, materials and actions as they create animal homes.
- Children can retell stories such as *The Gingerbread Man* using pictures, toys, and puppets. They recall repeated lines of stories and predict what will happen. They quickly learn new vocabulary as they talk to each other and adults during practical tasks such as when mixing water, cornflour and food colouring together and using the mixture during imaginative play.
- Reading is strongly promoted and children thoroughly enjoy looking at books and listening to stories. Children are beginning to recognise sounds in spoken words and some can already make simple three letter words by combining sounds and letters.
- Children frequently use early writing skills to record what they have been doing. Both indoors and outside children show a keen interest in mark-making skills. They write cards and make lists and many form recognisable letters. Some are beginning to write three letter words.
- Children rapidly develop their mathematical skills. Very attractive mathematical activities engage the children, for example when children use a light box to illuminate 'glittery numbers' and count out 'jewels' when placing them in treasure bags. Children can sometimes recognise numbers beyond 10 and are beginning to add numbers together and to take away.
- Children make excellent progress in their physical development as they frequently use their excellent range of equipment in the outdoor area to climb and balance. Their practical skills develop through many activities, such as when they use tools to make 'bread' from mouldable materials for their 'The Bakery' role-play area.
- Great strides are made in children's creative development through role play and model making. After very high quality music making with a visiting specialist teacher, children successfully created their own instruments by suggesting ideas and choosing from a very suitable range of materials.
- Children are provided with an exciting range of experiences to enhance their understanding of the world, for example through regular trips to the forest school, feeding and observing birds and growing vegetables in their allotment.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- All parents and carers who spoke with the inspector could not praise the teachers enough for what they do for their children.
- Extremely good relationships and the way staff organise equally high quality activities both indoors and outside help the children to learn effectively. They just as easily use numbers outside as indoors because staff build opportunities most successfully into children's play and give children the optimum level of challenge, including the most able.
- Staff are very good at playing with children and turning a game or an activity into an adventure; for example, when the teacher asked the children to take their gingerbread models on an adventure in the classroom to interpret positional language such as under or along. When staff read a story out loud children will often cluster around agog to hear what happens next.
- All staff demonstrate excellent understanding of how young children learn. They are exceptionally skilled at helping reluctant children to turn into lively communicators. Staff constantly talk to children, ask questions that make children think and listen to them carefully so they can further their vocabulary and understanding.
- Staff are very good at getting the children to be inquisitive and ask questions about the world around them. Children's deep interest in nature was developed when they made bird food in the outdoor area and were very curious about which birds would like their food. However, staff sometimes miss opportunities for evoking children's curiosity and understanding about physical processes, for example by helping children to explore how moving parts work or why their model bridges collapse.
- Teachers are very adept at helping all children to concentrate for longer than is usual for their age. During adult-led group learning, staff promote children's listening, attention and thinking skills very successfully. For example, during challenging tasks such as inventing different endings to the story of the *The Gingerbread Man* staff enable the children to test out their ideas with practical materials and activities.
- Checks on children's progress are extremely thorough. They are constant and used to plan activities which build on children's interests or make adjustments to activities to meet the learning needs of different groups and individuals, including for those with special educational needs or those who speak English as an additional language.
- Staff's skills and approaches are based on specialist knowledge and advice. This addresses children's specific speech and communication skills and personal development and enables them to make rapid progress in their language development and adjustment to Nursery routines.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The school's promotion of equality and diversity is excellent. Staff make sure that there is no discrimination between groups so that all children have the same wealth of opportunities to flourish.
- Staff are very respectful of the wide range of cultural heritages and experiences in the community they serve. They carefully draw on this diversity to very strongly promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, children are extremely considerate of each other, valuing and celebrating each other's differences.
- Relationships between adults and children are excellent so that children thrive in the safe, secure and stimulating atmosphere. Adults give sensitive support so that children are willing to try unfamiliar activities and develop new interests.
- Strong links with families, supported through home visits, mean that children develop very trusting relationships with staff. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that their children are safe and really enjoy coming to school.
- Levels of care are extremely high and excellent welfare arrangements ensure that children who might be distressed are looked after very quickly and sensitively. Children's behaviour is excellent. Staff deal promptly with instances of unwanted behaviour, teaching children how to

empathise and resolve conflicts with others.

- Children say they feel very safe. They say that adults look after them and make sure 'everyone has a turn'. They experiment with new activities safely because adults are there to help them, for example negotiating the climbing frame or using simple tools when creating their musical instruments. No evidence of bullying or racist incidents was seen during the inspection and school records show that none has needed to be recorded.
- Children are developing high levels of personal hygiene and this was seen during the inspection when the children knew they had to have clean hands when handling food, including before eating lunch. Children enjoy attending the lunch club which is a friendly, social occasion where children become independent and develop good manners.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteachers' and governors' outstanding leadership, ambition and vision provide the drive for constant improvement. The assistant headteacher provides excellent day-to-day leadership and support, including when the headteachers are working in their other two schools.
- Partnerships are exceptional. Excellent links between the three federated schools help staff to gain a wider perspective by observing others teach or sharing expertise, such as the development of work relating to the teaching of literacy, numeracy and more able children. The federation has been most successful in fostering joint working and children's improved outcomes.
- All staff work very closely with families and other providers, including the children's centre. Parent consultation meetings with staff play a key role in helping parents and carers to continue children's learning at home, raising their confidence and enjoyment of school and supporting families in need.
- Very robust systems enable school leaders to check the quality of teaching and help staff to achieve excellence in their teaching. Staff have superb training opportunities, which include visits to schools outside of the area. Pay is securely linked to performance and staff appreciate that the same systems are used in the other schools within the federation.
- The very effective assessment systems are common to all the schools in the federation. This enables school leaders, staff and governors to quickly compare how well provision is enabling children to progress.
- This information is used very effectively to gauge how initiatives are raising the proportions who are working at expected or higher levels for their age and how different groups achieve. Successful practice in one school is then adapted to the needs of other schools.
- The federation gives senior leaders outstanding opportunities to develop their leadership skills across the schools. Middle leadership is developing well across the schools, for example for literacy, mathematical development and forest schools. However, this is not yet as developed for the breadth of understanding the world, including physical processes.
- Children's learning activities are very stimulating and this has led to children making quicker progress, particularly in developing early reading, writing and number skills.
- The local authority, recognising the school's effectiveness, rightly provides light touch support. The school finds the support excellent and appreciates the quality of the local authority's expertise and its prompt response should problems arise. The local authority has had a particularly good impact on helping to promote the excellent links across the federation with other nurseries and feeder schools.

The governance of the school:

- Governance is outstanding. Governors, who oversee the work of all three schools, have succeeded in supporting the Nursery to improve its level of effectiveness and to fully cater for children's diverse needs. Governors are ambitious, very accomplished and use their expertise very wisely. They have created excellent systems for governing this Nursery school within the context of the federation, ensuring there is no duplication of systems. For example, there is one school business manager for the federation, and the costs of professional training are

reduced when shared between the three schools. They have an excellent understanding of assessment data and use this systematically to check children's progress as well as regularly visiting the school. Links with other schools, parents and carers and the local community have been developed to a very high level and governors constantly promote the quest for high quality teaching and learning by supporting and also challenging the school. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are fully 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	109756
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	431068

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	74
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paula Shephard
Headteachers	Helen McHale and Sarah Cottle
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2011
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