

# Aclet Close Nursery School

Aclet Close, Bishop Auckland, County Durham, DL14 6PX

**Inspection dates** 4–5 February 2014

|                                |                      |                    |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Outstanding        | 1        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Outstanding</b> | <b>1</b> |
| 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's achievement is outstanding. Irrespective of starting point or need, each child receives the help and support they require to make rapid progress and achieve highly.
- Highly effective and sometimes inspirational teaching ensures that activities capture children's curiosity and extends their understanding. Yet, now and then, opportunities are missed to raise achievement even higher in literacy.
- Staff rigorously check children's progress and are highly skilled in tackling any slip-ups or misconceptions.
- Behaviour is outstanding as is children's sense of keeping safe and avoiding risk and danger. Children make rapid progress settling into well-thought-out school routines. They quickly develop high levels of self-control for their age in the happy, friendly atmosphere. They are considerate and kind.
- The school's performance is strengthened by the first-rate links with parents and specialist support agencies. Staff fully understand the importance of involving parents in their children's development. As a result, parents feel extremely welcome and their views valued.
- The headteacher's passion and drive invigorate and enthuse the staff to ensure the school provides the very best for each child.
- Leaders and managers provide excellent leadership securing children's rapid and sustained progress. Checking of school performance is rigorous and accurate. Prompt action is taken to address any areas that require further sharpening up or enhancing.
- The astutely led governing body has a very accurate view of school performance. Governors are highly effective in both supporting and challenging the headteacher to ensure the Nursery gets even better, constantly adding to its strengths.
- The rich and varied curriculum supports children's personal development and their critical thinking and creative skills exceptionally well, especially in the imaginative and innovative outdoor learning environment.
- The Nursery is a very remarkable place for children and their families. Children's great enjoyment and high achievement prepare them exceptionally well for the next stage in their education.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across morning and afternoon sessions on both days. Four sessions were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector completed a scrutiny of children’s learning journals and the school’s performance information with the headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- The inspector spoke with children and had discussions with the headteacher, staff, parents, five governors, including two parent governors and the local authority Educational Development Partner.
- The inspector examined a range of documents including those related to safeguarding, self-review, the monitoring of staff performance, the school’s improvement plan and records relating to children’s progress and behaviour.
- The inspector took account of 21 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and seven staff questionnaire responses.

## Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized nursery. It offers flexible provision between 8.30am and 3.30pm for 39 full-time equivalent places.
- Almost all children are White British with very few at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of children supported through early action is broadly average with the proportion supported through early action plus above average. There are no children with a statement of special educational needs.
- Most children have one year in the Nursery before transferring to a Reception class in other schools.
- The school provides additional 'wrap-around' care over lunchtime for families.
- The headteacher is a regular headteacher trainer on the National College for Teaching and Leadership training programmes.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Making certain that the teacher's highly effective skills maximise opportunities to develop children's early reading and writing skills, when they are ready, adding even more to the existing imaginative and thought-provoking methods.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- When children join the Nursery, their skills are well below what is typical for their age. Communication, language and mathematical skills are sometimes exceptionally low.
- All children make rapid and sustained progress in all areas of learning to reach the expected level of development by the time they leave the Nursery. About one-third of children exceed what is expected of them in all areas except literacy. This is because staff are highly effective in presenting challenge for the most able and removing any barriers that prevent children's rapid progress. An interesting range of activities relentlessly builds upon each child's previous learning.
- Children with special educational needs also make excellent progress. They receive exactly the right help they need to enable them to thrive and learn extremely well in the happy, friendly atmosphere.
- In communication, language and literacy children make excellent progress from their low starting points. This is because of the relentless focus developing speaking and listening using a wide range of stimulating activities, whether indoors or outdoors. Early mark making is a routine feature of activities, such as writing their own name and preparing lists.
- Letters and sounds are practised continuously in lively ways so that children can make sense of simple words as soon as they can. Rapid progress is made taking the first steps to becoming fluent readers. Yet, every so often opportunities are missed to take even more advantage of the imaginative methods that are used to practise their reading and writing skills.
- Children learn to count objects and order them by size and shape. Staff use songs and rhymes to count accurately and match their answers to the correct figure on a card or washing line. Most able children are expected to complete tasks with increased levels of challenge and complexity, such as matching the colour of the counters to that of a line of collecting dishes.
- Children's physical development is excellent because staff identify precisely the needs of each individual child and provide interesting activities to practise skills. For example, stepping correctly between ladder rung spaces on the floor firstly forwards, then sideways and finally backwards. This prepares them really well for more adventurous activities, such as climbing and skipping with a rope, when outdoors.
- The social and emotional development of children is exceptional, because of the high-quality classroom help, sensitive methods and constant encouragement that they each receive. They quickly learn to become independent, confident, considerate and helpful towards each other.
- All groups of children make similar progress. This includes the very few of those children learning English.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because staff work extremely closely together sharing their ideas and skills to support children's rapid development. All staff are ambitious and determined that each child reaches their full potential.
- From the moment they enter the Nursery, clear routines ensure children become confident and independent. For example, they learn to register themselves, plan their work and play, know where to find toys and equipment and quickly grasp the rules of caring, sharing and tidying up. Those children with special educational needs are exceptionally well supported.
- In sessions when children's progress is rapid and achievement high, it is because teachers:
  - have a crystal clear understanding of each child's level of development and exactly how they can learn best
  - make certain that tasks are challenging and thought-provoking
  - observe children extremely closely and make accurate assessments of their knowledge and understanding, which clearly inform the next steps in their learning

- follow children’s thinking and curiosity using questions skilfully to check and stretch their understanding and help them move on quickly.
- Throughout the day, including in the lunch club, staff constantly encourage children to work things out for themselves. For example, one boy was observed totally absorbed examining a mackerel and working out that when they are out of the water they are unable to survive. Staff are highly skilled at allowing children to have a go by themselves and accurately timing their interventions. Very occasionally, opportunities are missed to extend children’s early reading and writing still more.
- The outdoor environment, including the newly constructed magic garden and the woodland area, is used extremely effectively to foster the children’s sense of wonder and curiosity in the world around them. They develop care, sensitivity and respect for creatures such as mice, insects, birds and of course the fairies at the bottom of the garden.
- Excellent use is made of specialist support to adapt tasks and activities to meet individual needs, such as when using a small pipette to improve fine motor skills when creating a rainbow pattern of paint.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Children develop excellent attitudes towards work and play because activities are active, captivating and engaging. They eagerly start each session and settle quickly and confidently in the friendly atmosphere. The school makes excellent provision to ensure all children are safe, self-assured and protected. This includes in the lunch club. All parents agree. Parents particularly appreciate the free access they are provided with to hand over and collect their children.
- During story time and music sessions children sit quietly and calmly, listening intently to the story or the instructions for playing an instrument. They are confident asking questions and happily and patiently take turns to answer questions or participate. They are quick to help and support each other, copying the high standards the staff set for them.
- Children are considerate and kind and cheerfully work together, sharing views and ideas. For example, when using the water hand pump outdoors to create a stream to run down the mountain, they happily work hard in pairs.
- The school provides exceptional support to make sure that children learn how to keep themselves safe and be safety conscious. They are encouraged to be adventurous when outdoors, such as when climbing and swinging. In the woodland area they learn about the dangers of fire when helping to light the fire pit, before having a cup of hot chocolate.
- Unpleasant or unkind behaviour is uncommon, because children are taught to be caring, kind and thoughtful. This is confirmed by school records. Very well-understood routines help the Nursery to run smoothly. Children are very aware of exactly what is expected of them and are confident sharing any anxieties or fears they may have with staff.
- Discussions with parents reveal that they have complete trust and confidence in the staff to provide the highest quality of care and support. Children’s attendance is high reflecting their exceptional levels of enjoyment.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The school has been outstanding for the previous two inspections and continues to add to the quality of all it provides for the children. This is because the headteacher, ably supported by the assistant headteacher and staff, leads and manages the school with passion and drive. High expectations of what each child can achieve are firmly embedded in all aspects of the school’s work.
- The management of this tightly knit teaching team is outstanding. Leaders and managers keep a very close check on the quality of learning experience for each child and the progress that they make. Accurate assessment and detailed observations ensure that each child’s experiences are

constantly enriched and built upon. Staff training is sharply focused on school improvement priorities.

- Strong partnership-working with parents makes certain that they are fully involved in their children's development. Teachers share children's 'learning journeys' with parents which contain an extremely detailed personal record of how each child is developing.
- Excellent links with support agencies, such as health workers, ensure that each child receives the right kind of support that they need. No stone is left unturned to remove any barriers to learning that may exist to ensure that all children can achieve equally well. Any form of discrimination is not tolerated.
- The rich and varied curriculum is constantly developing to provide even more interest and imaginative challenges for children. The recently landscaped magic garden is adding to the opportunities for children to explore, investigate and be imaginative and bold. A wide range of visits and visitors further adds to the high quality of their learning.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, with much excellent practice supporting the outstanding quality of care and support provided for children.
- The local authority has a clear-cut and accurate view of school performance, providing challenge and support in equal measure.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are passionate about the school and its value as a high-quality community resource. They bring a wide range of expertise and experience, which coupled with their hands-on approach, ensures that they have a firm grasp of the strategic direction of the school. Currently, this includes discussing the feasibility of extending provision for two-year-olds. They are extremely well informed about the quality of teaching and ensure that performance management is robust with pay scale progression closely linked to the achievement of children. They use training effectively to extend their skills, such as when reviewing data and checking children's progress. Governors manage finances effectively and ensure that health and safety checks keep all children and adults safe.

## 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

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 113972 |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Durham |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 430870 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

|  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Nursery                       |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Maintained                    |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3–5                           |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                         |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 71                            |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body            |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | John Lethbridge               |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Nick Birbeck                  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 17 May 2011                   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01388 603006                  |
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