

# Highfield Nursery School

Highfield Road, Saltley, Birmingham, B8 3QU

**Inspection dates** 26–27 February 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- The interim headteacher has successfully set about restoring previous quality by providing excellent guidance and direction to the staff. Leaders' stringent checks on teaching are bringing about improvements.
- The rooms in the nursery are bright, inviting and well organised. Teaching is good. Teachers provide a rich diet of interesting and exciting opportunities for the children.
- The children make good progress and achieve well.
- Behaviour is almost always good and children learn to share, be kind to others and use resources sensibly. They are keenly interested in the activities provided and most concentrate well.
- The bilingual capacity of a great many staff means that children's own language is valued. It is used extremely well to help them settle and feel confident. This confidence transfers to their learning of English.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted well through the wealth of different cultural experiences that reflect the children's backgrounds.
- Supported by the interim headteacher and interim assistant headteacher, the staff have developed very effective ways of working through watching children closely, identifying their interests and curiosities and providing resources to encourage learning.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Checks on teaching and learning are not shared fully among staff with responsibilities due to their limited experience. This limits staff understanding of how to improve teaching further.
- Early reading experiences are not as effectively woven into children's play as those relating to early writing and numbers.
- Some children lack the self-control needed to keep themselves safe and do not think about the impact of their behaviour sufficiently well.
- Teachers do not make sure that more able children need to think hard in their work.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector spent over four and a half hours directly observing the children at work in the nursery. This included whole group sessions, small group work and free play sessions both inside and outside. About an hour and a half of this was observed jointly with the interim headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the interim headteacher, staff, two governors, a representative of the local authority and the headteacher from a local children's centre that works closely with the nursery. The views of teaching and non-teaching staff expressed in 13 responses to the staff questionnaire were considered.
- There were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be considered but the inspector spoke with a group of ten parents and with parents informally at the start of the school day.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation. This included children's 'special books' which have examples of their learning, data on their progress, planning and monitoring documentation and information relating to the safeguarding of children.

## Inspection team

Christine Merrick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The nursery had some significant difficulties early in 2013 which affected staffing. An interim headteacher and interim assistant headteacher have been in place since May 2013.
- Highfield is larger than the average sized nursery and offers both full-time and part-time places.
- Far fewer children than average are of White British origin and a much higher proportion of children than average speak English as an additional language.
- There is a larger-than-average proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs who are supported at 'Early Years action' is above average. The proportions of children supported by 'Early Years action plus' or who have a statement of special educational needs are also above average.

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

- Raise the standard of teaching to outstanding by:
  - providing additional opportunities for senior staff to model excellent practice alongside staff
  - building on recent training to make sure that the opportunities for children to use books in their play are as effective as those for early writing and numbers
  - making sure that there are additional challenges to extend the thinking of the most able when they are engaged in play-based activities.
- Increase the capacity of staff to take leadership and management responsibilities by:
  - providing enhanced training opportunities so that staff with responsibilities can make a more effective contribution to leading teaching and learning
  - linking with similar schools where excellent models are evident to extend their experience.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children make good progress because staff organise interesting, motivating experiences in a warm, nurturing manner so that all children thrive. When children start at the nursery, their skills and knowledge are mostly below that expected of their age. By the time they leave, they are well prepared for school and are confident, eager learners.
- Language develops well because staff provide excellent support. The nursery is alive with different cultures and languages and as a result children gain the confidence needed to develop their English. They are encouraged to record the different sounds they make and listen carefully to sounds around them. This means that they are ready to learn about the relationship between letters and sounds by the time they go to school.
- The children are able to concentrate for extended periods of time in activities that they choose for themselves. For instance, they work together to create complex structures in the 'block play' area and create stories around these with small animals and characters. Staff encourage them to think about what they have done previously and plan what they are going to do, so that they stay focused on their tasks.
- The nursery is particularly successful at developing children's skills and knowledge in the area referred to as 'Expressive arts and design'. The studio room is an excellent resource that is well used by the children and they benefit from art and dance specialists who work with them. As a result they are able to use resources and tools such as scissors well.
- Different groups of pupils, such as those known to be eligible for free school meals, achieve well because the interim headteacher makes sure that close attention is paid to their progress and talks with staff regularly about the children. Children who are disabled or have special educational needs have good support through one to one activities or in small groups so that they make similar progress to other children.
- Early reading and writing skills are promoted as they search for their names on arrival or fill in appointments in the dentist role-play area. They count confidently. They can count how many children are present, using numbers into the twenties. They use mathematical words and concepts when playing outside and in the block area. Reading is successfully developed in group time and on a one-to-one basis, but is not as well developed as other skills during the activities that children choose for themselves.
- Adults make sure that they ask harder questions of the more able in group times so that they are suitably stretched. However, they do not always step in to make sure that these children continue to be challenged when following their own interests and playing with their friends.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because the staff organise the rooms in the nursery effectively. For instance, the studio provides many opportunities for children to learn about different materials such as paint, collage, and large model making. The children particularly enjoy working with clay and combining this with natural materials to make trees and forest scenes.
- The outdoor area is used very well in all weathers. Teachers use the obstacle course to introduce vocabulary such as 'under', 'over', 'through' and 'on top of' whilst encouraging children

to challenge their balancing and climbing skills. The outside space is planned well to include areas where children can dig and grow things and where they can practice their early writing skills. As a result children are very well motivated to learn.

- Relationships between children and adults are warm and friendly. Staff provide good guidance and support. As a result the nursery is a happy place for the children and they learn to trust and respect each other because the adults around them provide good role models for them.
- Staff are given time to discuss what children are learning and how well their skills and knowledge are developing. This information is used well to make sure that different activities are planned and additional resources are offered so that children often have to think hard about their work. Examples of the children's learning over time are displayed in many interesting ways all around the nursery so that this can be revisited and talked about.
- The adults use group times well to develop the children's speaking and listening skills, to encourage a love of books and develop number skills. There are also many opportunities for children to practice their early writing and to use their understanding of numbers when playing but these opportunities are not so effective in promoting early reading.
- Conversations with children are used well to prompt their thinking and to explore and extend what they know. For instance, an adult in the dentist role-play area used this time to talk with the children about what they remembered from the dentist's visit and discuss how they could look after their teeth.

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

- The behaviour of children in the nursery is good. This is because they enjoy being there and want to attend. Parents reported that some of the children were disappointed at weekends when they couldn't go to nursery.
- The great diversity of cultures and languages promotes children's tolerance of difference and they learn to accept and value each other quickly and easily. This supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Children look after the resources well and they are happy to help tidy up, wipe the tables and help each other when putting on aprons. They are able to co-operate with their friends, take turns and show patience when waiting, for instance on the obstacle course outside. They are able to find the resources they need for their work for themselves with little help from adults.
- The children are keen and eager to learn because the teachers take great care to watch carefully and notice what interests them. They then plan activities that are relevant and meaningful so that the children are often totally engrossed in what they are doing. During group work they listen carefully and are eager to participate.
- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is good. When parents were asked about the safety of their children they were all confident that the nursery was a safe, secure place where the children were cared for well. The children are taught about some of the ways in which other children may be unkind to them and what to do about it.
- Children generally respond well to instructions and children who find making changes difficult are helped by being given plenty of warning. In this way behaviour is managed well and there are few conflicts. The atmosphere in the rooms is calm and purposeful. However, there are a

few children who have not yet learned to manage themselves safely and do not understand the need for the boundaries that are set. As a result behaviour in the nursery is not outstanding.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The interim headteacher provides very strong leadership. She quickly and successfully stabilised the nursery during a very difficult period, bringing both enthusiasm and purpose to the work of the staff. Staff refer to her as 'committed and focused' and 'inspirational, and very passionate about what we are capable of achieving'.
- A comprehensive review of roles and responsibilities has resulted in greater clarity so that all staff understand what is expected of them. Both teaching and non-teaching staff appreciate this and as a result the team is much stronger. Their involvement in the development of future plans and the constant discussion about practice means that they have developed a shared view of how they want the nursery to be.
- Regular checking, constant discussion about practice and a very supportive approach to development mean that significant improvements have been made to the quality of teaching and learning. This is particularly evident in the way that teachers check children's progress and make plans for future learning. Targets are set for all staff that are very tightly focused on bringing about the developments that the nursery has prioritised. Pay and promotion are clearly linked to good teaching and how well it promotes learning.
- The range of experiences and activities provided is imaginative and engaging for the children. The different areas, the studio, the room where children use large blocks for construction, the café room and the outdoor areas provide a wealth of experiences that are added to by visits and visitors and the artists who visit every week.
- The interim headteacher and interim assistant headteacher have generated much improvement across the school which is having a positive impact on teaching and learning. However, there are not enough experienced teachers who are confident and able to take over some of the leadership responsibilities so that these can be shared across the nursery. Also, staff do not have many opportunities to look at what works best in other, similar schools.
- The local authority has provided good support to the nursery. They have made sure that the nursery has had appropriate advice on staffing and financial issues and have provided additional support for teaching and learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - There have been some changes on the governing body. Governors have checked the range of skills they have and made sure that everyone has training to give them the skills and knowledge to support and challenge the school. They are regularly in school and have taken part in learning walks to see for themselves what is happening in the nursery. They are kept well informed by the interim headteacher so that they know about the quality of teaching and understand how teachers' work is checked and linked to pay and promotion. They understand that the progress data available to them demonstrates the good progress children make and they use this to ensure staff are held to account. They ensure that safeguarding practices are in place and meet 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.
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## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103125
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	431114

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>	3–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	105
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Daly
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sharon Lewis (Interim Headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 July 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 675 4617
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