

Phoenix Nursery School

Phoenix Street, Blakenhall, Wolverhampton, WV2 3JS

Inspection dates 18–19 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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 achieve well during their time at the Nursery, making good progress in their learning from starting points which are often below, and sometimes well below those expected for their age.
- Activities are varied and inviting, with good opportunities for the children to learn language and number skills both indoors and outdoors.
- Teaching over time is generally good and sometimes outstanding. Most staff know the children well, and provide work for all abilities.
- The school keeps the children very safe. They feel secure and confident.
- The children usually behave well and are ready to share and take turns. They can concentrate for long periods of time, particularly when supported skilfully by an adult.
- The school is well led by the headteacher. Children's progress is accurately measured and tracked. The managers and governors ensure that there is a clear link between the pay teachers receive and the good progress made by the children.
- The headteacher effectively monitors the quality of teaching and how well children are progressing to make sure there is constant improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- All staff are not always thorough enough in making sure that all activities make a meaningful contribution to children's learning.
- Occasionally staff focus too much attention on one child and let others become less engaged and lose concentration.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 sessions during the inspection, including two with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and other members, a representative of the local authority, subject coordinators and other members of staff.
- The inspector spoke with a number of parents as there were insufficient returns to the online questionnaire (Parent View). He also took into account all of the returned staff questionnaires.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including data on children's current and previous progress, the school development plan, performance management documentation and records relating to children's behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Geoffrey Dorrity, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized Nursery serving an area where many families live in rented accommodation.
- A high proportion of children join the Nursery other than at the usual times.
- All children attend for five sessions a week and the school offers a flexible timing of sessions to meet the needs of parents.
- A large majority of children are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups, with those from Indian heritage forming the main group.
- Many children come from families where English is spoken as an additional language and a large proportion of these are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs who are supported at early action is below average. There are no children on roll who are supported at early action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The Nursery works closely with partners such as the local children's centre and speech-and-language therapists to support families and children to access any additional support they may need.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to be consistently outstanding by:
 - making sure that all sessions are delivered effectively so that all activities provide at least good opportunities for learning
 - ensuring that all adults increase the opportunities and time for all children to talk about what they are thinking and doing during activities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When children join the Nursery, their skills and knowledge are below those expected for their age in most areas of learning, and particularly low in mathematics and physical development. Children achieve well and they nearly all make more progress than expected. This enables them to develop skills that are broadly in line with those typically found among children of their age by the time they move on to primary school, with a few doing even better than this.
- In reviewing assessments and looking at the children's work, there is no noticeable difference between the attainment of the different ethnic groups. Those who are learning to speak English as an additional language progress well and many are fluent in speaking by the end of their time here.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they receive support early. Staff know how to make learning manageable for the children. Consequently, the sequence of learning activities the children need to take to achieve success is applied well and the children benefit.
- Children who are more able make more rapid progress because they are given more challenging activities to further develop their thinking and learning.
- Children make particularly good progress in personal and social development. They settle quickly at the start of the day, know the routine of registering themselves and immediately find friends and enjoyable activities to learn, without direct adult help. When they went outside, they dressed themselves in their coats and helped each other into their waterproofs.
- Children make good progress in literacy, for example recognising their names and learning to hold a pencil correctly to make marks. There are many opportunities for developing children's writing. For example, after painting, they wrote their names to label their work. In the construction area, children were encouraged to record their work. There are writing materials freely available for children to use.
- Children's love of books is exceptionally well fostered. A bookshop in the imaginative play area encouraged them to read books, and discuss them with each other and adults. They also practised their writing and mathematical skills there, writing lists and adding up prices. Children recognise individual letters and can identify the sounds they make. They are beginning to read simple words, by sounding out the letters and merging them together.
- All children make progress in their physical skills and some make rapid progress. They are supported to build large structures on which they practise balancing. The outdoor environment supports well all aspects.
- Children make very good progress developing their mathematical skills. Staff skilfully use incidental opportunities to reinforce and develop learning. For instance, children counted out the number of gingerbread men they had made, used number paddles to find the number, and then matched the same number of buttons, demonstrating their understanding of number to 10.
- Children have increased opportunities accessing information and communication technology through the recent introduction of resources to assist more focused learning. They are proficient in their use of the equipment available. They are confident in generating instructions for

characters to follow on the screen and recognise the link between their instruction and the subsequent movement.

- They have a good understanding of the world around them because, as well as the small Forest School outdoor environment at the Nursery, children also complete six-week sessions at a local Forest School where they explore the natural world and build dens. Staff take every opportunity to develop this area. For instance, a child arrived with a daffodil which was used well as a stimulus for language development. The child was able to describe the flower from close observation, draw it and record the features, such as the frilled petals.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching over time is nearly always at least good and, occasionally, outstanding. Staff have a good knowledge of how young children learn. Teaching is effective in the way staff question and talk to the children about what they are doing. This deepens children's thinking and develops their language and communication skills well.
- Support for those children who are learning English as an additional language is excellent. Staff are very skilful in developing language skills and understanding with a particular emphasis on those who are only just starting to speak. For instance, children were enthralled in a session where characters from *Goldilocks and The Three Little Pigs* stories were hidden inside boxes. They each chose a box in turn and opened it in wonder to find a doll, which they were then able to name and match to the book.
- Staff effectively take every opportunity to develop mathematics and number skills in all Nursery activities. They also teach numerical skills directly, and progressively enhance the children's understanding of number.
- Staff meet regularly to discuss children's progress and their emerging interests, and they use this information well in providing learning activities. Observations and assessments of what children can and cannot do are carried out very thoroughly and used to support children's good progress.
- There is a stimulating learning environment indoors and out. Staff have adapted the learning environment to encourage children's interests and enable them to make better choices in their learning. All resources are stored in easily accessible containers, with clear labels of the contents. Consequently, the children are able to get equipment out and put it away for themselves. Children are successfully encouraged to make decisions about what equipment they want to use. They manage it successfully and tidy up afterwards.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The Nursery settles new children in quickly when they start school so that they are soon ready for learning. Those who had joined only recently before the inspection had made very good progress in understanding the daily routines. All children display good attitudes to learning and enjoy the time they spend in the Nursery.
- The behaviour of children is good. Staff communicate their expectations clearly. They pay good attention to getting children to listen and try hard. Records show that inappropriate behaviour is rare and there have been no incidents of bullying since the previous inspection. Children learn to treat each other with kindness and consideration and get on well together.
- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is good. The Nursery conducts careful risk

assessments for all its activities and teaches children to use equipment safely. Children feel safe and have trusting relationships with the staff. Staff reinforce safety messages. For instance, before going outdoors, they talked through which areas were safe, and children were able to identify hazards, such as slipping on the mud.

- Children mainly respond with enthusiasm to the activities provided and concentrate for long periods of time, such as when exploring the properties of different materials when they made gingerbread-men models. A few children lose their focus temporarily when activities are not as well planned or delivered as well as they could be.
- Staff work closely with parents and other agencies to avoid unnecessary absence and most children attend the Nursery regularly.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership and personally carries all leadership responsibilities. She is ably supported by the staff and governors. Together, they know the school's strengths and areas that need improving and use this information effectively in development planning with a clear focus on improving children's achievement. This shows the Nursery's strong capacity to improve further.
- The management of teachers' performance is robust and leaders make effective use of this process to bring about improvement. There are several examples where staff at all levels at the Nursery have progressed because of the high-quality training that has been provided for them.
- Staff performance is well monitored with regular observations of their work taking place. This has ensured that teaching is good overall, so that most children make at least the progress expected of them and some make better-than-expected progress.
- Highly effective partnerships with a range of support agencies ensure that individual children receive the support that they need to raise their achievement even more.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- The local authority has an accurate view of the school's performance and describe it as an effective school which, due to the expertise of the headteacher, has responded well to the needs of a changing community.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body fulfils legal requirements for ensuring the school is a safe place, and that staff are suitably checked and trained in child protection matters. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching, the management of staff performance and how staff pay relates to their effectiveness. They set robust targets for the headteacher in her performance management and regularly receive monitoring reports on progress towards these. They check data on children's progress and have a good understanding of how well the Nursery is doing. Governors play an important role in decision making, based on first-hand information that they assemble for themselves on the quality of teaching and children's achievement. They maintain a good understanding of the school's work by undertaking focused visits to the school and asking searching questions. They make sure that decisions about how to use available funds are rational and in the best interests of the children, for example in the recent staffing restructure, or in the planned capital expenditure on enhancements to the outdoor area.

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	104281
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	426923

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	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kuljit Dhadday
Headteacher	Brigitte Baxter
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2010
Telephone number	01902 558126
Fax number	01902 556935
Email address	phoenixnurseryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk

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