

Rothesay Nursery School

59 Rothesay Road, Luton, LU1 1RB

Inspection dates 11–12 June 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough children are reaching the expected levels for the age range, especially in speaking and reading.
- Teaching over time is variable in quality and none is outstanding. Pockets of good teaching are not shared widely across the school so that others may learn from it and improve their practice.
- Teachers' planning does not take into account the targets for children who are disabled or who have special educational needs to accelerate their learning and progress.
- Leadership and management responsibilities are spread too thinly across the staff. Too much falls to the headteacher to make the necessary improvements.
- Children are too dependent on adults to ensure that they play safely with toys and equipment. Their understanding of risk requires improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Children's behaviour is good, whether they are playing inside or outdoors.
- Adults know the children very well and engage with them sensitively through play.
- Children's attendance has improved markedly.
- There are plentiful opportunities to promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There is a high level of satisfaction among parents and carers, who are particularly complimentary about the school's impact in improving their children's personal and social skills.
- The headteacher and governors focus strongly and relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Inadequate provision has been removed.

Information about this inspection

- Her Majesty's inspector (HMI) made two monitoring visits to the school prior to this inspection. Evidence from these visits was taken into account.
- Teachers, early years educators and early years workers were observed working with children during morning and afternoon sessions.
- HMI looked at a range of documents, including the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and plans for improvement. Data about children's learning and attendance were checked, as well as safeguarding records and those for the safe recruitment and vetting of staff.
- There were too few responses to take account of the Parent View online survey. Instead, parents' views were gathered through responses to a school questionnaire and a meeting with a small representative group.
- Meetings were also held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, governors, a local leader of education (LLE) and a representative from the local authority. HMI spoken to children informally during sessions.

Inspection team

Linda Killman, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- This large nursery school provides part-time places for 137 children. Some attend for a two-hour session and others stay for three or five hours.
- Children come from a very wide range of minority ethnic groups. Three quarters speak English as an additional language, which is much higher than the proportion in most other nursery schools. There are 25 different languages represented in the school.
- The nursery has specially resourced provision, funded by the local authority for children with special educational needs supported through early years school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. Currently, nine children with severe and complex needs are supported through this provision and they are fully integrated with other children. Overall, a very small minority (17%) of children are disabled or have special educational needs.
- High numbers of children join or leave the nursery during the year. Some are new arrivals to the country or are referred to the nursery by health or social care professionals. Others move on to destinations in other schools in Luton.
- A Local Leader of Education from Hillborough Infants School is supporting the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching by:
 - sharing more widely the good practice in teaching that already exists
 - reviewing weekly and daily planning to include the targets for disabled children and those who have special educational needs so that they make good progress
 - increasing children's participation in speaking and reading activities, giving more time for them to respond and ensuring that they are not introduced to too many new words in each session.
- Increase children's ability to foresee risk while they play with toys and resources.
- Spread leadership roles and responsibilities more evenly across the staff to increase the school's capacity to further improve teaching and achievement by:
 - ensuring that staff have clear job descriptions reflecting their role, qualifications and the level of responsibility for which they are accountable
 - providing coaching and training for leaders and managers so that they lead confidently with less direction from the headteacher
 - recruiting a special needs coordinator or training an existing staff member to lead this important aspect of the school's work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Most children start at the nursery with skills that are well below expectations for their age. Over time, they make expected progress in most areas of learning and could be doing better. Some children are making more than expected progress across most areas of learning. However, children's attainment generally is below expectations for the age range.
- Those children supported through the specially resourced provision make small but adequate steps of progress in relation to their starting points. They are supported sensitively by staff and have access to the full range of activities because the school promotes inclusion well. One parent commented that contact with the school to discuss her child's progress was very good.
- Other children with special educational needs generally make steady progress. Their progress is not good because the weekly and daily planning does not focus strongly enough on their targets for learning. Consequently, staff are not always recognising where an activity can be adapted to meet their individual needs.
- Children who speak English as an additional language make sufficient progress in learning the language. Some parents whose children started school with very little English commented that they were very pleased with their children's progress in giving explanations in English.
- Recently the school has focused on language and communication to improve children's conversation and talk. This has been effective and thus far, half of the children have made better than expected progress in their communication skills.
- Most children are attentive, listen well to adults and respond to them appropriately. Those who have limited concentration and attention make very good progress in small-group sessions specially designed to increase their attention span.
- The most-able children are benefiting from a greater level of challenge in planned activities helping them to exceed expectations for progress. Some are beginning to apply their skills in linking sounds and letters (phonics) to recognise rhyming words and spell simple three-letter words.
- All children enjoy engaging with stories and books, and visiting the school's well-stocked library. However, children's attainment in early mark making or writing skills is more advanced than their reading skills. The gap is too wide.
- More children make at least expected progress in personal, social and emotional development than in the other areas of learning. They make friends, share toys and gain confidence as learners. Children are motivated and enjoy taking part in a wide range of activities indoors and outside.
- Children are making better progress in mathematics because the adults are capitalising on opportunities for them to count, calculate and recognise shapes while they play.
- Children's control and coordination when playing with balls, moving toys or climbing under, over and around the climbing equipment is good. Their fine motor control for mark making, writing, drawing, threading and balancing is less well developed.

- All children show fascination in nature, whether growing fruit and vegetables in the garden, bird watching, minibeast hunts, or learning about life cycles. For example, when their parents and carers arrive to collect them, they take great delight in showing them how tadpoles in the tank are developing into frogs.
- Children of all backgrounds mix together well because opportunities for play and learning acknowledge their particular religious beliefs and cultures. They develop a keen sense of community through, for example, taking food to the food bank at a local supermarket so that 'no-one goes hungry in Luton'. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement to be securely good over time. Since the previous inspection, the school has eliminated all inadequate teaching. Some is now good and this is accelerating children's progress. None is outstanding.
- Curriculum planning is more closely aligned to children's interests and targets than previously. Provision is planned with these in mind, and this is increasing children's participation in and enjoyment of the activities so that they make better progress, especially the most able. Even so, the individual targets for children who are disabled or who have special educational needs are not included so that adults can plan in advance to meet them.
- All adults are engaging in conversation with the children and modelling speaking for them to copy. However, they sometimes swamp the children with too many new words at once and do not give them enough time to respond and practise their talk. As a consequence, children's progress in speaking is less well developed than most other aspects of their learning.
- Since the previous inspection, resources used to support children's learning have improved significantly in both quality and variety. Indoor and outside spaces are used well to stimulate excitement in learning. Staff ensure that they offer new challenges for those children who stay on for the afternoon session.
- Adults are vigilant about children's health and safety and step in quickly to ensure that they play safely. They are not doing enough to help children to develop their own awareness of risk and how to play safely.
- Staff are checking that children are making sufficient progress across the areas of learning. They observe children as they play and assess how well they are learning. The new electronic system for tracking children's progress highlights strengths and weaknesses so that curriculum planning can be adapted suitably to address any gaps in children's learning.
- Signing, symbols and pictures are used well to help the children who speak a different language at home. Adults who are bilingual support children who speak the same language as them.
- All adults are actively teaching good behaviour rather than controlling it and this has made a huge difference in improving children's understanding of how to make good choices. The behaviour policy is implemented consistently across the school. Children are developing positive attitudes to learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The school's work to keep children safe and secure requires improvement. Adults are very vigilant and alert to health and safety matters but the children's understanding of how to reduce risk is limited. For example, they are not always mindful of others when playing with wheeled and moving toys and have to be reminded by an adult frequently to wear a hat when playing outside in the sun.
- The behaviour of children is good. They learn to regulate their behaviour and self-control, and can explain what is right and wrong. They know the rules, look forward to rewards for their achievements and learn from their mistakes.
- Children develop good attitudes to learning. They enjoy engaging in a wide range activities, some led by adults and others they choose for themselves. Children are motivated; they stick at activities and like a challenge. For example, a child who was playing on the climbing frame said, 'At first I was scared but I'm not scared now.'
- The school has improved children's attendance markedly. From September to June this year, their attendance is almost two percentage points higher than in the same period last year. The family worker has worked closely with families to secure this improvement and the headteacher sets high expectations for children to attend regularly.
- Children take care of their school and equipment. They help to tidy up and look after resources. Through children's respect for and appreciation of the natural world and extensive use of the outdoor spaces, the school has achieved the Green Flag Award.
- Children mix freely and appreciate diversity through their participation in a wide range of different cultural or religious celebrations and events such as the Rothesay Carnival. They sample foods and listen to stories from around the world enthusiastically.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management are not good because scope to secure improvements is not as strong as it could be. The expertise of some staff is not used to maximum benefit when they are capable of leading aspects of the school's work. Annual appraisal of staff's performance is not linked closely enough to the job descriptions for which they are accountable.
- The headteacher has too many responsibilities that reduce the time available for monitoring the school's work and planning for future improvements. The school has no special needs coordinator and, while the headteacher, with support from the family worker, is filling this gap adequately, she is unable to sustain this level of involvement. There is no long-term plan in place to fulfil the requirements of this demanding role.
- The headteacher and the governing body have been effective in driving forward essential improvements in teaching and learning, which are improving rapidly. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and other professional partners check on the quality of teaching and give points for improvement, with an expectation that any weaknesses will be addressed. This work has been pivotal in achieving the school's successful removal from special measures within a year.
- Staff work hard and most have risen to the challenges set for them by leaders and managers. They have benefited from regular training which has led to their better understanding of how young children learn best. The best practice is not shared widely across the school so that other staff may learn from it.

- The curriculum supports children’s learning suitably, especially their personal development and early acquisition of language and literacy. The school has moved away from themes which focused on mundane or routine activities to those that start with children’s interests and capitalise on learning opportunities when they show interest. Children’s attitudes and disposition to learning have improved as a consequence.
- The bursar (who is a member of the senior leadership team) expertly generates clear reports and charts about children’s progress and attainment. The data are used well by senior leaders to spot aspects of children’s learning that require improvement. In addition, she carries out all necessary checks for vetting new staff and ensures that they show in full on the school’s single central register.
- All of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been addressed successfully. The environment for learning has improved significantly. Staff and governors give a suitably high priority to health welfare and safety issues.
- Relationships and communication with parents and carers are good. Parents appreciate all that the nursery provides for their children. Diversity is respected and celebrated through the school’s strong values about inclusion and equality of opportunity.
- The local authority has provided good targeted support for this school throughout its journey out of special measures. The improvement adviser and the Local Leader of Education have made regular short visits to check for progress and longer visits to review the school’s work in more depth. These have been extremely valuable in supporting the headteacher in making accurate judgements and increasing her ability to articulate the findings clearly.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Following a review of governance after the previous inspection, governors have focused relentlessly on ways to challenge the school and hold it to account. In particular, their understanding of data has improved significantly so that they are able to pinpoint where improvement is required. Minutes of their meetings show that governors are asking the right questions. The governing body systematically checks the school’s progress against the priorities set out in the development plan. Governors visit the school regularly to fulfil their statutory duty to monitor the school’s work, check on health and safety matters and ensure that requirements for the welfare and safeguarding of children are met. Finances are managed carefully, spending wisely on provision to support children’s learning while making sensible savings where possible. The governing body know how to link pay progression to performance and do not hesitate to support the headteacher in robustly tackling underperformance of staff.

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	109419
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	441627

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	137
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Lodge
Headteacher	Janet Brownjohn
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2013
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