

Houghton Le Spring Nursery School

Nesham Place, Houghton le Spring, Tyne and Wear, DH5 8AE

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- All adults are leaders of learning and are eager to improve and learn from each other. Their constant reflection about their own performance and the progress children make results in exceptional teaching and achievement.
- School leaders and governors support this thirst for improvement through well-planned opportunities for professional development which build on their in-depth knowledge of the school's strengths and areas which need further development. As a result, the school is continuing to improve.
- Highly effective relationships with parents and a continual dialogue about learning enables parents to make an important contribution to their child's learning and development.
- Children's behaviour is outstanding. They arrive at school enthusiastically and confidently, and are keen to learn. They play and learn together harmoniously. Minor disagreements are rare.
- Children feel confident and safe in the nursery because of the extremely good relationships they have with all adults. This high level of trust means that children are secure and willing to accept the challenges adults create to extend their learning.
- Teaching is of exceptional quality. Adults' knowledge of each child is extremely detailed as a result of thorough, ongoing assessments and the close relationship staff have with parents. Adults use this information very skilfully to plan challenging and absorbing activities that capture children's interest and enable them to learn exceptionally well
- Adults' very sensitive and thoughtful discussions with children are highly effective in helping children to think deeply and to extend their ability to communicate well.
- The organisation of resources and equipment prompts children to find creative and imaginative uses for them, which helps to extend their learning. Adults thoughtfully supplement resources with objects and activities which they know will spark children's enthusiasm and interest.
- Achievement is outstanding. From the outset expectations are high for all children and they make rapid progress. Those children who are capable of achieving more highly do so as a result of constant challenge.
- Children with special educational needs are supported to overcome difficulties as quickly as possible. They make the same excellent rates of progress as other children.
- Governors' knowledge of the school is good but is not gathered frequently or rigorously enough to offer the highest level of challenge and support to school leaders.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a number of extended sessions in the nursery both indoors and outdoors in the morning and afternoon sessions, during which she observed children's learning and talked informally with them. Two of the observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. There was also a walk around the nursery where the headteacher described the organisation and purpose of placing resources and equipment in particular ways.
- The inspector held discussions with staff about their planning, assessment, training and professional development. She also met with a representative from the local authority and a group of three governors.
- The inspector took account of the 17 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View); the school's own consultations with parents and spoke to a group of parents informally. She also took account of a letter and telephone conversation from separate parents.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's own data on children's progress; planning and monitoring documentation; records relating to behaviour and attendance; documents relating to safeguarding; records of children's work; and of the curriculum the school offers children. She also took account of a survey completed by staff.

Inspection team

Susan Waugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized nursery school.
- Children join the school the term after their third birthday and most transfer to two nearby primary schools.
- Nearly all children are White British.
- At the time of the inspection, eight children needed extra help with their learning and development, and were supported at early years action or early years action plus.
- There were no disabled children.
- Most children attend for either five morning or five afternoon sessions a week, and some attend in a more flexible pattern over four days.
- At the time of the inspection the headteacher had been in post for six weeks
- The school is registered to provide for two-year-olds and for those families who wish to pay for their child to attend for more than the statutory 15 hours a week. The quality of this provision does not form part of the inspection. A separate inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the governing body implements, as planned, a more systematic approach to monitoring all aspects of the school's work so they can hold school leaders more rigorously to account and support them even more effectively.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- All staff are highly ambitious for the nursery and the parents and children they serve. They are never satisfied with their performance and work together, on a daily basis, to evaluate how they can improve their already outstanding performance. Their commitment to equality of opportunity is demonstrated in their ambition for every child and the very positive impact they have on their learning and progress.
- The headteacher has rapidly grasped the strengths and areas for development within the nursery and has identified each individual's particular talents. She prompts staff to consider all aspects of the nursery's work and fires them with enthusiasm to check the impact of what they are doing and how they might be even better. The excitement they demonstrate as they talk about how a new approach to planning children's learning has deepened their understanding is one such example.
- Middle leaders are exceptionally effective, giving direction to steer the whole school team, with a firm focus on improving the quality of children's learning. A project undertaken by one member of staff on drawing has been shared with staff and with parents so that children are now more confident and capable writers. The leader for special educational needs has devised a highly effective system which supports children to overcome any barriers which make learning more difficult.
- Performance management is organised well and linked effectively to salary progression. Each individual is challenged to improve their performance, to learn from best practice within and beyond the school, and to share what they have learned with others.
- The curriculum encourages children to be reflective, thoughtful learners. Adults are excellent role models and take every opportunity to extend children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development from the minute they arrive in the morning. This is supported by the exceptionally well thought-out learning environment where children are encouraged to make creative and imaginative use of the resources made available to them. The local area, such as the park and allotments, are used particularly well to develop children's understanding.
- Parents' pride in the school is evident. They are fully appreciative of the way their child is nurtured, cared for and developed. Equally the school's work to involve them and support their contribution to their child's learning is of a very high level.
- The local authority offers light touch support to the school. The strength of its work is recognised and is signposted as an example of best practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know how effective the school is and how it can be even better and are effective in their role. They use their individual expertise and knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development effectively to check the work of the school and hold leaders to account. Safeguarding procedures are very secure and meet statutory requirements. Governors manage finances very carefully and are mindful of the need to reward those members of staff who are very effective, including the need to ensure that they maintain a high level of performance. Consequently, arrangements to manage the performance of staff are effective. Although governors have a good grasp of children's performance and the quality of teaching, their checks are not yet rigorous or frequent enough. They have recognised this and have plans in place to improve their performance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is outstanding.
- The atmosphere in the nursery is one of calm, ordered purposefulness. Children are happy and settle quickly to the routines and rules of the nursery. They willingly share and take turns, supported caringly by adults.
- There are few incidences of inappropriate behaviour and children quickly learn how important it is to think about others when they are playing. Parents fully endorse this view and know their child is very well cared for. There have been no exclusions or reports of bullying behaviour within the school.
- Children take pride in their work, eagerly sharing their achievements. Other children are generous in their praise of others. One girl commented, 'He's a genius.' when appreciating a map drawn by another child. Children become fully absorbed in what they do because adults have thoughtfully considered what will sustain their interest and develop their learning.
- Adults are gentle but firm in setting boundaries within the nursery. Children quickly become aware of the

need to clear up after they have finished a task so that it is left tidy for the next person.

- Children quickly learn to become independent. They remember to wash their hands before eating snacks and know they need to dress themselves appropriately in waterproofs before going outside.

Safety

- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding.
- Children's sense of security is quickly established as a result of the very close relationship which staff develop with parents. Parents report that this gives them reassurance that their child is safe.
- Children quickly learn and settle into the day-to-day school routines. This ensures that they are positive about making full use of the nursery's resources.
- Each child has a special 'key person' who is responsible for ensuring that they get to know them and their family as well as possible. They develop close and trusting relationships with the key person in particular but also with all other adults. Adults listen to and respect what each child has to say and contribute.
- Children are supported to understand risk and to keep themselves safe but not to be afraid to try new and difficult things. For example, they use real knives with modelling dough but understand the risks and know they must use them with care. Adults challenge children to solve problems such as climbing to get berries from a tall tree. This involved an adult supporting the child to evaluate and overcome risks throughout the task.
- Most children attend school regularly and arrive promptly. The few absences which occur are mainly as a result of illness. All absences are followed up quickly and rigorously.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is consistently excellent because adults have very high expectations of all children. School records, as well as evidence in children's learning stories and adults' planning books, confirm that teaching is of consistently high quality over time.
- Adults stimulate children's interest and encourage them to concentrate for extended periods of time. This results in the rapid development of knowledge and understanding.
- All aspects of learning and development are taught exceptionally well. Adults have excellent subject knowledge and introduce children to appropriate but demanding subject specific vocabulary. For example, a group of 'new starters' were introduced to terms such as 'pictogram', 'sequence' and 'one more' in a mathematics session.
- The teaching of children's communication skills is outstanding. Adults use a range of strategies to encourage children to use an ever-widening vocabulary and increasingly complex sentences. The use of questioning provokes children to think deeply about what is happening.
- Adults' planning is extremely detailed and based on very thorough accurate ongoing assessments which are analysed carefully each day. Consequently, each child is challenged every day to build on and develop what he/she has learned the day before. This information is frequently shared with parents so that they can support and contribute to their child's learning at home.
- The very high quality learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, supports the development of mathematical, reading and writing skills outstandingly well and ensures that children are well challenged to develop their knowledge and understanding in all areas of the curriculum. The environment also supports the development of creative and imaginative learners very well because many resources have multiple uses and can be adapted in countless ways. Adults continually review and reflect on the resources at hand and adapt and supplement these to ensure that children are always learning at a fast pace.
- Adults very effectively encourage children to think about and review their learning, helping them to make links in their knowledge and understanding.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Most children enter nursery with skills which are generally slightly below those typical for their age. By the time they leave nearly all have reached the expected levels for their age and most have exceeded them in their physical development, communication skills and their personal, social and emotional development. This represents excellent progress.
- Boys and girls achieve equally well as a result of the very detailed knowledge adults have about each individual and the extremely well-tailored learning opportunities they plan as a result.

- Very sensitive support for children who experience some difficulties with their learning, including those with special educational needs, is extremely effective. As a result these children make the same excellent progress from their different starting points, with some reaching the expected level in some areas of learning and development by the time they leave the nursery.
- The more able children are challenged very well so that they reach standards which are above those expected in most areas of learning and development, or in those areas where they demonstrate a particular talent.
- Children quickly develop an enjoyment of reading and of books. Selecting from a well-displayed range they can lie on the floor or sit on a sofa and share with friends or an adult. They learn how to handle books through sharing learning stories and understand the purpose of print by reading the signs around the nursery.

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	108746
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	448095

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	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Juliana Heron
Headteacher	Sarah Dixon-Jones
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2012
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