

Gracelands Nursery School

Grace Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, B11 1ED

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2015

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------|
| | 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. Select

- The inspirational headteacher, strong leadership and high quality teaching combine to secure outstanding achievement for all children.
- The assistant headteacher and staff who have additional responsibilities share a commitment to providing a safe, stimulating place for children to learn and succeed.
- Teaching is outstanding because all staff are highly skilled in providing children with purposeful learning experiences, checking their progress and stimulating children's love of learning.
- Indoor and outdoor areas are very well resourced, thoughtfully organised and well looked after. Every day the children have a rich range of activities to experience, explore and discover.
- Children behave exceptionally well because the activities are interesting and invite investigation. The staff and children show high levels of mutual respect for each other.
- Children and parents benefit from the warm welcome and high level of care extended to them. All staff and governors are committed to children's well-being.
- Regular checks on children's progress ensure that all learning is relevant, purposeful and developmental. Children make outstanding progress over time and are well prepared for their transfer to Reception in their next schools.
- Partnerships with parents are excellent. The many opportunities parents have to attend workshops, discuss individual matters or join their children on visits help parents to support children's ongoing learning at home.
- Governors know the nursery well and have developed a good balance of support and challenge. They are still recruiting in order to develop further a strong range of relevant experience, expertise and skill.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed children playing and learning in a range of activities including those led by adults and some chosen by the children.
- Discussions were held with children, the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the coordinator for special educational needs, governors, a representative from the local nursery school network, a representative from the local authority and members of staff.
- A wide range of documents were considered including: systems for checking children's progress; records relating to behaviour and attendance; the school's self-evaluation and plan for improvement; school policies; the work of the governing body; reports on the quality of teaching; plans for learning; children's learning journals; displays and presentations of children's work; and documents relating to safeguarding.
- The views of staff and parents were taken into account. Questionnaires were completed by 15 staff. There were 17 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector also took account of the views of parents during an informal meeting on the second morning of the inspection.
- The inspector looked at children's work and displays around the building.

Inspection team

Deana Holdaway, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Gracelands is a smaller than average-sized nursery school.
- It provides part-time nursery education for 13 children and full-time education for 39 children.
- Children enter the nursery in the term of, or after, their third birthday.
- Most of the children are from South Asian backgrounds.
- A majority of the children speak English as an additional language. Most are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs is similar to that found nationally at 5%.
- In May 2013, governors appointed a new headteacher. She provides considerable support for the local network of nursery schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure governors' ongoing support and development so they can build on their recently acquired strengths.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's inspirational leadership and sincere commitment to children, families and the wider community have created a dedicated and highly competent team of staff. Her knowledge and high expectations of early years' practice has driven change while, at the same time, motivated everyone to do their best for each and every child at Gracelands.
- All leaders and staff with responsibilities have together created a haven of learning where all children learn and play together exceptionally well. Each learning area, both inside and outdoors, is scrupulously well organised and resourced. Displays and photographs use every opportunity to celebrate children succeeding or to introduce new ideas. Children use the computers and interactive white boards to practise selecting, moving and saving characters. The limited space outside is well planned and creates a range of experiences for children to enjoy and explore. Nevertheless, all staff continually seek improvement and plan the next steps.
- Leaders relentlessly observe and consider the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. Staff know that their ideas for possible solutions are welcomed and taken seriously. All staff have targets to achieve, drawn from the agreed school development plan. As a consequence, everyone is responsible for its success.
- All staff know the children well. They rigorously check children's progress and achievement, share their findings and plan detailed next steps to ensure children's rapid development in each area of learning.
- The headteacher, staff and governors have taken an exceptionally detailed and sensitive approach to the government's 'Prevent' programme to tackle the potential for extremism and radicalisation, and to ensure safeguarding practice. Detailed training has been provided for all staff. Everyone is acutely aware of the risks of extremism for children and families, and the indications of abuse. The process for reporting concerns is clear and well understood. The fundamental principles of 'Prevent' and safeguarding have been taken to the very heart of the school's beliefs, values and practice. All staff and governors are united in their commitment to children's well-being.
- Every day the children are given a rich range of activities to experience, explore and discover. All adults have an in-depth knowledge of the areas for learning required for children of this age. Every activity is planned to ensure that the children purposefully gain breadth in their knowledge, develop a range of appropriate skills and deepen their understanding, appreciation or means of expression. Children's experience of learning is enhanced by regular visitors who share their expertise, for example, in pottery, music and dance. Story tellers share tales from a variety of cultures and children consider the different beliefs, traditions and celebrations found in modern Britain. Children and adults all show a high level of mutual respect and care. Diversity and individual choice within rules and boundaries are understood and discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
- The school works closely with parents and local children's centres to establish the children's strengths, difficulties and interests before they enter nursery in September. This shared information helps staff quickly to establish priorities so that planned activities are purposeful from the start. In addition, this early contact ensures that the nursery is able to provide wider support for families where it is needed.
- Staff provide considerable support and training for parents so they can help their children to learn and play at home. Parents appreciate the warm, genuine welcome they receive every day. They confirmed their children loved coming to school. One mother said, 'My daughter hates the weekend!'
- The headteacher is committed to the school's ongoing improvement. Staff are absolutely clear about their individual responsibilities in achieving agreed development priorities. Leaders gather an impressive range of evidence on which to base decisions regarding teachers' salary increases. All members of staff know they are accountable for children's successful progress and achievement over time.
- The local authority has delegated all nurseries' development, support and training to a network of nursery

schools. The school's considerable strengths are well respected and the local authority and nursery network have encouraged the headteacher and staff to work with other nurseries to share their excellent practice.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The Chair of the Governing Body speedily took on board the feedback from the previous inspection in June 2014 and arranged for an immediate external review of governors' strengths and areas for development.
- The governing body was reconstituted in September 2014. As a result, a relevant range of skills, knowledge and expertise are represented.
- Governors visit the school regularly to observe closely the school's work, consider what works well and contribute to identifying necessary improvements within the available financial budget.
- Governors are suitably knowledgeable, including about the quality of teaching and how well children in this nursery learn compared with others, to ask searching questions and seek in-depth responses.
- Governors oversee and contribute to decisions regarding staff salary awards and are aware of the checks made on staff's performance.
- They ensure that all safeguarding measures are met and processes adhered to.
- Governors are aware that new and current governors require on-going training so they can build on the growing expertise represented on the governing body.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. High standards of behaviour are evident at all times and in all activities. No child has been prevented from attending the nursery because of poor behaviour.
- When children start at the school many are insecure and are not used to mixing with other children. Staff designed and introduced a successful project, 'helping hands', which emphasised how hands could be helpful, kind, gentle, welcoming and creative. The children learned how hands could be used as signs of friendship and care. Photographs of the children displayed around the work areas reinforced their understanding and they were proud of being seen doing 'the right thing'.
- All children know the routines of the day and they move calmly and confidently from one activity to another. Whether they are outside or indoors, children interact politely, take turns and share their enjoyment of learning.
- Children become engrossed in their activities because they are interesting, fun, imaginative and require thought, care and exploration. As a result, children practise, persevere and take delight in their successes.
- Children enjoy their responsibilities and understand how routines and jobs help to create a smooth running day with clean and tidy tools. They lay the table for lunch, correctly placing the cutlery, cups and flower arrangement. They select and put away tools and replace large toys outside. At the end of each week the children collect the cooking aprons and hats and place them in the washing machine.
- Children are rightly proud of their school and are excited by learning. Attendance is excellent.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Strict procedures are followed for all visitors to the school. Thorough checks are regularly made on all areas of the nursery, inside and outside. All practical activities are assessed to consider possible risk. Children contribute to the assessments by offering ideas and explaining what makes them feel safe.
- Children show an exceptional awareness of others when they learn outdoors. Children ride tricycles slowly and carefully in narrow winding areas but confidently build up speed in more open areas. They take care on climbing frames and other structures but show high levels of confidence. All activities are supervised conscientiously yet sensitively.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding over time and never less than good.
- Staff check what individual children can and cannot do on entry to nursery. Activities are planned consistently to enable children to learn, acquire, practise and build new skills. Adults skilfully question and explain to secure children's understanding. Children's progress over time is recorded with accuracy and integrity.
- All adults lead group activities. They astutely listen to children's responses and amend their own explanations if necessary. Their questions skilfully deepen children's understanding. They speak clearly so that children can copy and extend their vocabulary. There is a consistent mix of careful listening, time for thought or comment and some fun. Children's interest and sustained concentration are impressive. They are keen to please, join in readily and always try to do their best.
- The pace of learning never stands still at Gracelands. All adults consider how well the children have completed individual activities. They take full account of children's questions, comments and ideas and amend activities accordingly so that all areas of learning are continuously taken forward.
- Classrooms and outdoor areas are prepared tenaciously to ensure an exciting and imaginative range of experiences. Adults lead, guide and support children across all areas of learning so that they broaden their knowledge, deepen their understanding and learn new skills. Many of the resources and pictures around the learning areas are numbered clearly or have letters and words visible. Adults frequently provide chances for children to count, sort, order, make marks and enjoy books. They provide a range of tools so that children can make a variety of marks.
- Children's understanding of number is reinforced by number lines, numbered plant pots, calendars and games for recognising and placing numbers. Teachers are imaginative in planning a variety of reasons for children to count, sort and measure.
- Adults frequently read stories to the children, talk about details in the pictures and encourage children to join in where possible. Adults act out stories for children such as Rama and Sita, the Christmas story and the Enormous Turnip so that stories come alive. Children seek out their own choice of books, hold them correctly and look through them in the right order.
- All staff ensure that children make excellent use of the outdoor facilities. Children climb, slide, balance, dig, create, imagine, ride tricycles, experiment and explore. All activities are richly supported by adults, who engage with children at all levels.
- Staff are quick to seize the opportunities provided by changes in weather. After rainfall, during the inspection, a practical activity called 'the mud kitchen' was introduced. Children carefully mixed mud with wooden spoons and poured water into large bowls to make mud of different consistencies. They counted ten paper cake cases and accurately estimated the amount of mud to put in each case before 'baking'.
- Children enjoy visits to places further afield. Staff arranged a journey for children and their parents using a local train service. Many of the children and adults had not previously travelled on a train. Parents confirmed that having been shown how to buy tickets and plan journeys they now take their children on organised family days out.
- Parents value the help the school provides them in showing how to share stories with children and point out letters, numbers and symbols while shopping. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about their children's time in school.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Most of the children begin nursery with a limited understanding or use of English. They are unable to use simple tools such as rolling pins, climb without assistance or put on, or take off, their coats. Many of the children are highly dependent on adult help and are reluctant to try new experiences.
- By the time they leave the nursery the vast majority of children have made excellent progress in all areas. All children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The nursery has established close links with local children's centres, playgroups and parents. As a result, the needs and range of children's abilities are understood from the start.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs are sensitively and appropriately supported at all times. Their needs are recognised and their individual developments are carefully tracked. Specialist advice is brought in when necessary and the range of support is amended as time goes on. The nursery never gives up on a child.
- The most-able children are quickly identified and they are given specific support to extend their early skills, for example, in recognising letters and the sounds they represent. They learn rhymes and experiment with words which all begin with the same letter. They learn how to count, calculate and describe two- and three-dimensional shapes. Staff work closely with parents to ensure that the skills learned in nursery are practised at home, particularly during the holidays.
- All children have a keen interest in books, stories, rhymes and songs. They can look at books easily because the books are placed at the children's level in their learning areas. They are beginning to recognise letters and happily sound them out as part of a story.
- Staff arranged a visit to Birmingham Library for the children and their parents. They were given membership cards for their continued use. Teachers led workshops for parents to show them how to help children enjoy reading and listen to stories.
- Children quickly develop their counting skills because numbers are displayed in a variety of places for different purposes. They sing number songs, order numbers correctly and measure each other's height with string. They learn comparative terms such as 'longest' and 'shortest', and use them correctly to describe different objects. The children know that learning these skills has a practical purpose. For example, every day, they take it in turns to count the number of children in the group, choose the correct number symbol and take the register to the school bursar.
- Writing activities help the children to make marks with care for a variety of purposes. They carefully copy and repeat symbols. Over time the children have developed the ability to define shapes with more accuracy and consistency. They can distinguish different types of mark and recreate them in sand, paintings and drawings. Children know that marks carry meaning.
- A member of staff wrote in the staff questionnaire, 'The children all make excellent progress and leave us confident, happy and with a love of learning.' She was right.

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

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| Unique reference number | 103135 |
| Local authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 447911 |

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

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| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 2-5 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 52 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Brian Baughan |
| Headteacher | Vanessa Frank |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10 May 2012 |
| Telephone number | 0121 7723124 |
| Email address | v.frank@grclands.bham.sch.uk |

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