

Whitecross Nursery School

Watson Street, Derby, DE1 3PJ

Inspection dates 27–28 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.

- The exceptional headteacher has galvanised the whole school community to accept nothing but the best. As a result, significant improvements have been made in the quality of teaching and the achievement of all children.
- Governors know the school extremely well and do everything in their power to make the school the best it can be.
- The Nursery promotes children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well with many opportunities to broaden their understanding of how to respect others and the concept of fairness.
- Excellent partnerships exist with parents who are extremely well supported and feel actively involved in their children's learning. They have every confidence in the school to keep their children safe.
- Very strong partnerships exist with outside agencies, such as speech and language therapy. This means that no time is wasted in securing for children any additional help they need.
- Children are excited and enthusiastic learners. The high level of care and concern shown by staff nurtures children's love of learning. Their high expectations and well-established routines support children's outstanding behaviour. Children feel very safe and secure.
- Teaching is outstanding because staff know the children in their groups extremely well and have an excellent understanding of how children learn. They use this information very effectively to plan just the right activities for each child.
- Children eagerly try out and succeed in an exciting and challenging range of play opportunities, both indoors and outside, by themselves.
- All children achieve exceptionally well in all areas of learning from their different starting points. They make rapid progress, particularly in their communication and personal development.
- Most children leave the Nursery having reached standards above those typical for their age in all areas of learning. They are very well prepared for their next stage of education.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight sessions across the school, including one jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the lead teacher, the governors, a representative from the local authority, and staff.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents including: the school improvement plan; the school's own review of its performance; and data on children's progress and planning records. He also checked records of the work of the governing body, reports on teaching, and documentation relating to behaviour and safeguarding.
- The inspector looked at a sample of children's work and focused in detail on the learning experiences of different groups of children.
- The responses of 30 parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, were scrutinised, in addition to the views of 10 parents interviewed.
- The inspector took into account the views expressed by 12 staff in the questionnaires they returned.

Inspection team

Geoffrey Dorrity, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Whitecross Nursery is an average-sized nursery school. It offers 40 full-time equivalent places. Currently 78 children are on roll and attend part time. Some children also attend other settings such as childminders and day care nurseries.
- The vast majority of families are from a White British background.
- A very small minority of children speak English as an additional language.
- About one in twelve of the three-and four-year-old children is disabled or has special educational needs, which is below average.
- No children are eligible for the pupil premium, due to their age. This is the additional government funding available for disadvantaged pupils.
- The Nursery holds Healthy Schools status and the International Schools Award.
- The headteacher provides support to local schools through membership of the 'Hub', a local network of early years practitioners hosted by the University of Derby, and leads on particular aspects of practice.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a recent appointment of a second teacher. The indoor and outside learning spaces have seen large-scale refurbishment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Write targets arising from checks on the school's effectiveness in such a way that they can be easily measured and have success criteria that clearly describe how outcomes for children will improve.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The passion of the headteacher, well supported by a highly committed staff, has ensured that significant improvements have been made in all areas of the Nursery's work. The drive to improve the quality of teaching has led to outstanding teaching, resulting in most children making outstanding progress.
- The headteacher and lead teacher have an exceptional understanding of early years practice. They inspire all staff to a shared vision of excellence in learning and behaviour. School leaders have demonstrated a relentless drive towards this and have been successful in improving the levels of achievement since the last inspection. This is not a school which is content to rest on its laurels but looks to improve in all areas of its work.
- Staff have a wide range of opportunities to improve their practice through in-house coaching and access to local and national courses. In addition, the Nursery's membership of the 'Hub' means staff can regularly share and extend their skills.
- Successful improvements to teaching have been achieved through an increased rigour in the monitoring of teaching, including lesson observations and scrutiny of children's work. High quality written feedback identifies strengths and areas for improvement. Middle leaders too have been instrumental in steering some of the improvements in teaching and learning.
- Regular and highly robust checks are carried out as to how well children are learning and the progress they are making. This means adults can spot anyone at risk of falling behind early and provide skilled support or extra challenge so that children make maximum progress.
- The school's plans for the future effectively address issues raised by looking closely at the information collected regarding pupils' learning and development. Senior leaders keep a close check on how well children learn and develop. This information is used to accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning. However, the school's plan for improvement does not make it clear how actions to improve teaching will result in better outcomes for children. Targets for improvement are not written in a way which can be easily measured. This makes it difficult for senior leaders to check on the rate of improvement.
- The range of activities and topics of interest studied have many strengths and prepare children exceptionally well for the next stage in their education. They are well designed to meet the differing needs of children and to strengthen their speaking and listening skills, writing skills and their personal development in particular.
- The school supports children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. It provides many rich opportunities for children to use their imaginations, and extend their understanding of the local environment and the world around them. Children learn about the lives of other children through their links to a school in Peru, and also celebrate festivals such as Diwali.
- The Nursery actively promotes equality of opportunity very well and is highly inclusive in every aspect of its work. It is warm, welcoming and nurturing, preparing children extremely well for life in modern Britain. They learn about tolerance and respect and what these mean in practice.
- The Nursery has excellent links with parents and carers, who feel very involved in their children's learning. Parents of disabled children and those who have special educational needs really appreciate how staff 'go above and beyond' to provide support for the whole family.
- The Nursery has developed highly effective links with other early years providers which children also attend. They exchange information about what and how well the children are doing, so that everybody is in the picture.
- The local authority knows the Nursery well and provides good quality support. It uses the Nursery as an

exemplar of good practice.

- Policies and procedures for safeguarding are extremely effective and reviewed regularly by the headteacher and the governing body. They ensure that all aspects are considered, that children are fully protected, and statutory requirements are met.
- The Nursery has excellent partnerships with other agencies such as speech and language therapy to help children get the help they need in a timely manner.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly effective in carrying out their role. They know the school well because they make regular visits. They are constantly developing their knowledge of their roles and regularly access training to keep up to date. They share the headteacher’s ambitious drive for continuous improvement. They are kept fully informed through the headteacher’s formal reports and their focused visits to look at the area of learning they are leading on. They also receive comprehensive data about the progress and achievement of the children and use this in rigorously challenging the Nursery and managing performance. They fully understand the quality of teaching and the link between pay and performance. They know how they would tackle any underperformance. They manage the finances well, and effectively link this to the priorities of the Nursery.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. Staff provide an encouraging and nurturing environment where manners, courtesy and respect are highly valued and consistently encouraged.
- Children settle into the Nursery quickly and respond very well to all adults with respect, affection and humour. During the inspection, when staff handed out toy animals, naming each one, during one activity, one child responded, ‘This is like a whole zoo!’ with a wide smile on his face. They build good relationships with their key workers, but are also confident when approaching a range of staff members.
- Staff show children what outstanding behaviour looks like, including sharing, taking turns and helping one another. As a result, children make rapid progress in learning how to manage their behaviour and express their feelings. Children negotiated sensibly with each other when playing in the mud kitchen. For example, when one child took another’s place around the table, they came to a resolution and decided they would share the seat.
- Children are very well motivated and engaged in their activities. Their attitudes to learning are exemplary, as are the levels of independence they show. They gather resources together themselves to complete activities, and replace these at the end of a session without needing to be reminded, for example in the mark-making area. They concentrate for extended periods of time and apply themselves well in a range of activities.
- Parents report that children behave well and easily settle at the beginning of each session. The Nursery reports no exclusions, bullying or racist incidents. Nevertheless, the systems are in place for managing such incidents, should they happen.

Safety

- The school’s work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding. The children use equipment sensibly. They are encouraged to take well-managed risks in the range of activities offered. For example, balancing on the crates, planks and tyres, or when using the climbing equipment.
- Children show their understanding of risk and how to keep safe. For example, in the construction area, they made signs for the track they had built on the hill saying, ‘Warning slippery!’ They could explain the rules around using the zebra crossing.

- Children respond well to signals at the end of sessions and take responsibility for putting equipment away safely and sensibly, working together well.
- Senior leaders' monitoring and record keeping is of a high standard to make sure children are safe.
- Parents are confident their children are safe in the Nursery. Attendance is extremely high, with no unauthorised absences. Children are eager to attend because they feel secure and enjoy learning and get very upset when they are unable to, for example when they are ill.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is of a consistently high standard. Adults are very knowledgeable about how children learn. The high quality of teaching and planning is focused on each individual child, and progress over time is rapid.
- Children's interests are taken into account to increase their curiosity and motivation for learning. Parents speak enthusiastically about how their children are taught and treated as individuals. For example, they understand how writing is taught differently, so boys may be building letter shapes with fruit to keep them active. Boys and girls were able to write lists in the role-play area, and used them to gather ingredients for a recipe.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is exceptional. Children are taught in groups organised around what they can do and need to learn next. Teaching staff make the activities enjoyable and purposeful. For example, the children all came together for a 'Whitecross Pirates' activity, where they used their bodies and ribbons to make the letter shapes which they recognised in pirates' names.
- The teaching of mathematics is outstanding. Children count confidently and recognise numbers. There are opportunities indoors and out for them to develop their mathematical thinking and challenge themselves through their play. Staff skilfully intervene to set the children problems such as 'How can we make sure everybody gets a slice of cake?' In the sand, the comparative language of 'bigger' and 'smaller' was reinforced when children were making fingerprints.
- The outdoor area, although not extensive, has been thoughtfully redeveloped to enable teaching and learning to flourish. For example, mark-making equipment is available in all areas; children practise their numbers by matching numbered bikes to the relevant parking spaces.
- The outstanding teaching is underpinned by very careful planning and assessment. Children's learning journals show clearly what children know, can do and need to learn next. Careful planning then ensures that each child is challenged on a daily basis to do more than they could before. This information is regularly shared with parents so that they can support their child's learning at home. Parents really value this partnership.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Most children start Nursery with skills that are typical for their age. By the time the children leave to start primary school they have made outstanding progress and most have skills and understanding that are above those typically seen in children entering the Reception year. This means that they are very well prepared for primary school.
- The school ensures that all children make rapid progress. Teaching staff use rigorous assessment that is based on accurate observations of what children need to learn next. The very small number of children who speak English as an additional language achieve well. Boys and girls achieve as well as each other.
- The most-able children do extremely well and build on their relatively strong starting points. This is because they are challenged by the well-designed early numeracy and literacy activities adults set for them. Staff reinforce their learning through providing opportunities in the Nursery where children can apply their skills independently.

- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make the same outstanding progress as their classmates. This is because staff are quick to identify problems or difficulties that may be holding them back. They provide specific help for individual children aimed at overcoming these problems. In addition, the Nursery staff work closely with other professionals and parents to make sure that everybody is working towards the same things, building on the children's learning and fully meeting their needs.

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	112480
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	449440

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Matt Symonds
Headteacher	Janet Mitchell
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2011
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