

Oxhill Nursery School

Oxhill, Stanley, County Durham, DH9 7LR

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children achieve well and make good progress as a result of the good teaching they receive. Children form warm and trusting relationships with adults who are good role models in contributing to children's strong personal development.
- Teaching is good. Adults use their knowledge of children well to plan interesting and engaging activities to support their learning and development.
- All groups of children make equally good progress including those with special educational needs and disabilities. These children receive sensitive and caring support.
- Behaviour is good. Children learn to take turns and to play with one another, guided by adults. Children follow school rules and become absorbed in the range of activities the school provides to help them learn and develop.
- Parents say their children are safe in school. They settle quickly and move confidently around the school. When needed, adults are there to offer comfort.
- Leaders and staff are fully committed to improving the school further. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and target developments thoughtfully, enhancing the range of opportunities for children to learn more rapidly.
- Leaders manage staff performance effectively. Responsibilities are deployed well to build on individual strengths and training is carefully considered. As a result teaching is continuing to improve.
- The curriculum is effective in supporting children's social and moral development very well as a result of carefully planned opportunities to play together. Improvements have been made so the curriculum is more tailored to meet the needs of different children. Their interest in reading is sparked by the use of high quality resources and good classroom organisation.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes adults miss opportunities to stretch children's thinking or allow them to do things for themselves.
- Children's understanding of the world is not as strong as other areas of the curriculum.
- Assessment is inconsistent. There is no complete overview of the progress of some groups of children.
- Plans to develop the school are not always detailed enough to measure how successful they have been in improving the quality of education on offer.
- Governors' checks are not rigorous enough to ensure the highest level of challenge and support.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a number of extended and shorter sessions in the nursery both indoors and outdoors in the morning and afternoon sessions, during which they observed children’s learning and talked informally with them. One of the observations was conducted jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed a number of shorter sessions with small groups of children out of the classroom.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff about their planning, assessment, leadership responsibilities, training and professional development. There was a discussion with a group of five governors and a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 20 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school’s own consultation with parents and inspectors spoke to a group of parents informally.
- 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. Inspectors also took account of a survey completed by staff.

Inspection team

Susan Waugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Derek Sleightholme

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than the average-sized nursery school.
- Nearly all children are of White British heritage.
- The school is a local authority designated outreach nursery for children with special educational needs.
- At the time of the inspection, 18 children needed extra help with their learning and development and were supported at early years action or early years action plus. Four children had an education and health care plan.
- Children attend the nursery for five morning or five afternoons or for two and a half days a week.
- 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.
- The deputy headteacher and a number of other staff have been appointed since the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement further by:
 - ensuring all adults consistently use questioning to challenge children to think more deeply about their learning
 - increasing opportunities for children to make decisions and do things for themselves
 - continuing to develop the curriculum and provide resources to widen children’s understanding of the world.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - adapting the systems used to track progress of all groups of children to identify the proportions making expected and more than expected progress
 - refining the school’s plans for improvement to include clear actions and timescales which allow the impact of improvements on children’s learning to be fully measured and evaluated
 - ensuring the governing body implement 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 more effectively.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders, governors and staff are firmly committed to the school motto, 'Everyone is special'. They want every child to achieve as well as they can in a friendly and harmonious community. As a result they do not tolerate any form of discrimination and are passionate about ensuring equality of opportunity for all children, no matter what their capabilities. Their success is demonstrated in the way children with special educational needs and disabilities participate fully in school life, and in the good progress all groups of children make.
- School leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching as a result of careful recruitment allied with effective training and support. Expectations of performance are high and leaders are aware that more needs to be done to ensure that teaching is of the highest quality. Consequently the procedures in place to manage the performance of staff are rigorous and only highly effective performance is rewarded.
- The headteacher's keen grasp of the strengths of individual members of staff has resulted in the deployment of staff with complementary skills, enabling them to learn from one another. Middle leaders are effective in contributing to improvements in the curriculum such as the development of the 'Forest School'. Equally, the leadership of special educational needs is effective so that support for children is well deployed and additional opportunities help them make good progress.
- School leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development as a result of the regular checks they make. They have targeted the right areas for development to support children to make better progress. For example, a weekly drama session with a specialist teacher is contributing to the development of children's communication skills.
- The plans for improvement do not, however, have sufficiently detailed timescales to ensure developments stay on track. They also lack enough information about how these actions will be checked to make sure they have made a difference to children's learning and development.
- The curriculum very effectively supports children's social and moral development through the daily opportunities for children to play together and learn about the importance of rules. This, coupled with encouragement to learn about and celebrate one another's differences, gives children a good start to preparing them for life in modern Britain. The development of outdoor learning and, in particular, the 'Forest School' is beginning to help children's understanding of the world.
- Parents demonstrate confidence in the school because very effective relationships with parents and families are at the heart of its work. Daily informal discussions are supplemented by regular invitations to discuss their child's progress or to participate in groups to help support their child's learning.
- A recently introduced system to check rates of children's progress over time is effective in identifying which individuals need an extra boost to help them stay on track. School leaders do not check the progress of all groups of children, however, to identify those who make expected and more than expected progress, so they can provide more precisely targeted support.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding children meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority has a good knowledge of the school and offers appropriate, valued, light-touch support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have worked hard to address their shortcomings found at the time of the last inspection. They now have a good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory requirements and the curriculum. They use this knowledge and their frequent informal visits to gain a good overview of what the school does so that they can make considered decisions about future school developments.
 - Governors manage finances carefully and are keen to reward those who are effective in their role. Consequently they oversee arrangements to manage the performance of staff carefully.
 - Governors have a good grasp of the quality of teaching, and have supported the drive to improve it. Their understanding of children's performance is good but overall, their checks on a whole range of school activities are not rigorous enough to offer the highest level of challenge.

The behaviour and safety of children are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is good. The children settle into nursery quickly and learn to follow the different routines of the day, such as the sound of the tambourine which signals it is time to gather together or

knowing that coats have to be put on before going outside.

- Adults are effective role models. Their good manners to children and one another mean that children learn to take turns and share or to say 'excuse me' or 'thank you' at appropriate times. Children willingly follow adult directions and listen when asked.
- Children's careful and considerate behaviour was demonstrated when they discovered a tiny insect in the 'Forest School' prompting them to take care when handling it and returning it to its habitat.
- Children play together well and cooperate with one another. They concentrate for increasing periods because of the interesting and engaging activities on offer. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are rare and children who struggle to take turns or share are given additional support to overcome these difficulties. There have been no reports of bullying or inappropriate name calling in the school. Parents endorse this fact.
- Children generally gain good levels of independence. They select their own equipment and resources when playing for example, but there are occasions when adults offer too much support and do not prompt children to think about their behaviour or its consequences.

Safety

- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is good. Warm, trusting relationships are forged with children and their families and these contribute to children's sense of security and safety. Children move around school confidently and look to their special 'key person' for comfort and reassurance if it is needed.
- Children use equipment and resources safely. Adults guide them in how to use and carry scissors and take turns when climbing. Children are encouraged to take appropriate levels of risk, such as traversing outdoor play equipment, with support.
- Most children attend school regularly and arrive on time. When absence occurs it is followed up diligently.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching over time is good. Parents confirm their longstanding confidence in the school and the continued progress their children make. Records of children's learning and assessments of their progress verify this.
- Children settle quickly and happily come to school. They are keen to learn because of the interesting activities adults offer them and as a result of their good relationships with adults.
- Staff plan sessions carefully to help children of different abilities make good gains in their reading and number skills. Communication skills are developed well by adults who model speaking in sentences, using an ever-increasing vocabulary.
- The staff organise classroom and outdoor areas carefully and thoughtfully. Additional resources are added when staff identify that children need more practice. The staff recently created the 'Forest School' in response to children's progress in understanding the world not being as good as it could be.
- Staff are particularly adept at ensuring that resources on offer will appeal to different children's interests. A book chosen by the teacher to share with a group of boys introduced them to terms such as 'volcano' and 'lava' for example.
- Resources and equipment are usually appropriate and help children's development for the intended purpose. Occasionally resources are not fit for purpose or are insufficient to extend children's understanding of the world.
- Most adults use questioning well to deepen children's thinking and to prompt them to solve problems but this is not always the case and some opportunities to extend learning are missed.
- Although there are some good procedures to encourage children to do things for themselves, such as finding their own name to register at the start of a session, this is not always the case. There are times when children are too closely directed so that they do not have a chance to think about how they might complete a task or solve a problem.

The achievement of children is good

- Most children enter school with skills which are below those typical for their age. They quickly make progress so that by the time they leave most have reached expected levels in their physical development, communication skills and their personal, social and emotional development. In their literacy and mathematical skills they have reached levels which are close to those typically expected. This represents good progress. Children's understanding of the world has been less well developed so that generally they

do not reach levels as high as in other aspects of their development.

- Boys and girls make equally good progress because staff have a good knowledge of individual children and their interests.
- Children with special educational needs and those with disabilities receive closely tailored support from sensitive and caring adults. Their encouragement helps children to gain in confidence and to make the same good progress that other children make.
- Adults use their knowledge of most able children to extend their learning, particularly in their reading, writing and mathematical skills. As a result they reach levels more typical of children in their Reception year.
- Children have many opportunities to learn about books and to enjoy reading. Their visits to the 'Book Nook', an attractive and calming space, make listening to stories and finding out about books particularly special. They understand the purpose of print by finding their own name cards at the beginning of the day and by reading signs around the classroom.

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	113970
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	449469

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	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beverley Ramage
Headteacher	Catherine Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2012
Telephone number	01207 232266
Email address	oxhillnursery@durhamlearning.net

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