

# Southway Nursery School

Amphill Road, Bedford, MK42 9HE

**Inspection dates** 11–12 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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.

- This is a Nursery where everyone is welcome and valued. The staff are passionate and committed to ensuring that the children and their families are at the heart of everything that they do. They make sure that every child enjoys learning and makes the best possible progress.
- The exceptional headteacher, very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and the senior teacher, effectively leads the whole school community to never accept anything but the best. As a result, significant improvements have been made in the quality of teaching and the achievement of all children.
- The Nursery promotes children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development exceptionally well through an exciting curriculum with many opportunities to help others, to take time to be reflective, and to promote British values.
- Excellent partnerships exist with parents, who are extremely well supported. Parents are keen to develop their knowledge of how children learn so that they can confidently assist them with their work at home. More could be done to help them do this. Parents have every confidence in the school to keep their children safe.
- Governors know the school very well and are extremely effective in supporting the leadership team to drive the school forward to constantly improve.
- Through the effective use of the family support worker employed by the school, very strong partnerships exist with outside agencies. This results in no time being wasted in children receiving the help that they need.
- Children are excited and enthusiastic learners. They eagerly access an exciting range of play opportunities themselves. The high expectations of staff and the well-established routines support children's outstanding behaviour. Children feel 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 to plan activities for each individual child.
- 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. A large majority leave Nursery having attained levels that are above those typical for their age in all areas of learning. They are extremely well prepared for Reception.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed sessions across the school, including two seen jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, staff, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- 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 25 parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, were scrutinised. In addition the views of nine parents interviewed were taken into account.
- The inspectors took into account the views expressed by the staff in the eight questionnaires they returned.

## Inspection team

Geoffrey Dorrity, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized nursery. There are 55 children on roll who attend part time.
- About half of the children come from a wide range of ethnic heritages.
- A third of the children are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language which is above average for this type of school.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs is below average.
- No children are eligible for the pupil premium due to their young age. This is additional government funding for disadvantaged children. The school does not receive primary PE and sports funding.
- The school offers on-site childcare, managed by the governing body, for children from three months to five years of age. This provision, known as Southway Day Care, is subject to a separate inspection.
- Since September 2013 the school has worked in federation with the Peter Pan Nursery School. This means they share a headteacher, deputy headteacher and governing body. The headteacher and deputy headteacher also manage Cherry Trees Nursery School.
- Since the last inspection the whole of the senior and middle leadership team has changed.
- The headteacher is a National Leader of Education and the school is a member of the Peter Pan Teaching School Alliance.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the work to help parents increase their understanding of how children learn so that they can support them more confidently at home.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- The exceptional headteacher, well supported by a highly committed deputy headteacher and staff team, has ensured that significant improvements have been made in all areas of the school's work. The drive to improve the quality of teaching and to challenge underperformance rigorously has led to outstanding teaching, resulting in all groups of children making outstanding progress.
- The headteacher and governors have very effectively managed the changes in staff and management arrangements so that the team spirit and staff morale have been enhanced. All staff are highly supportive of the school and take a real pride in being a member of the staff team.
- Leaders focus relentlessly on checking the quality of teaching so that the advice and guidance given improves the quality of the children's learning. All staff have a wide range of opportunities to improve their teaching through in-house coaching and access to local and national courses. In addition, as part of the Teaching School Alliance, staff have even more opportunities to share and extend their leadership skills.
- Successful improvements have been made to the checks carried out on how well children are learning and the progress that they are making. These regular checks ensure that staff can spot any learning weaknesses early and provide skilled targeted support or extra challenge so that children make the maximum progress. The highly effective and detailed analysis of this information by middle leaders ensures that there is excellent knowledge of how different groups of children are progressing, and that any perceived gaps in achievement continue to narrow.
- The senior teacher is highly effective at developing staff confidence and improving the quality of teaching. She leads the meetings at the end of the day when staff reflect upon the day's learning and what improvements can be made to speed up children's progress. The senior teacher has a clear overview of what is being taught, how it is being taught, and ensures that every child is accessing all of the opportunities provided. Senior leaders support her exceptionally well, enabling her to enrol on higher-level professional qualification courses, to further improve her leadership and teaching skills.
- The curriculum has many strengths and prepares children exceptionally well for Reception. It is well designed to meet the differing needs of children and to improve their speaking, listening and personal skills in particular. It supports children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development exceptionally well. Each half term there is a focus on values, for example 'being honest'. Staff will highlight values within stories, for example 'Cry Wolf'. The curriculum is rich with opportunities for children to explore their imagination, and to support and extend the understanding of their local environment and the world around them. For example, they watch eggs hatching into chicks, and caterpillars going through the process of change to become butterflies.
- Senior leaders ensure that children learn about the lives of other children through celebrating festivals such as Divali, Chinese New Year or Eid. Parents come into school to help children share their customs and to sample different foods. Children are taught to value differences through activities such as painting detailed self-portraits and comparing and contrasting themselves to others in the group. Parents feel that the many different backgrounds of the children in the school are a strength and enable children to begin to understand and appreciate similarities and differences between themselves and others. This means that children are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Children are acquiring an understanding that others, who are different from themselves, should be treated equally and with respect and tolerance.
- At group times children review their own learning and comment on what their friends have done. Through this children begin to learn about accepting others' points of view.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding are extremely robust and reviewed regularly by the headteacher and the governing body. They ensure that all safeguarding aspects are considered; that children are fully protected and statutory requirements are met.
- The local authority has been effectively supporting the governing body. This has enabled the governing

body to feel secure as the federation increases in size. As part of this process the local authority has also been advising and supporting the Nursery on the development of the role of assistant headteacher and middle leadership within other settings.

- The school has excellent links with parents, who feel very involved in all aspects of their children's learning. A typical parent comment was, 'You get lots of information about your child's progress. 'Folder Friday' every week and parents' evenings every term give you the chance to look at their work and talk to the staff about what they are doing at home.' During the inspection, staff worked effectively with parents to show them how to use a story book to develop their children's learning. However, some parents find other events, such as workshops, more difficult to attend and are keen to understand how their children learn so that they can support them confidently at home.
- The school has excellent partnerships with outside agencies to help children get the help that they need and to provide guidance for staff and parents if needs be.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are highly effective in carrying out their responsibilities. They have a good range of skills and experiences. Governors visit regularly and know the school well. They share the headteacher's ambitious drive to constantly make things better in the Nursery. Governors make sure that they have the information that they need to be able to ask searching questions and to be assured of the progress children make in the Nursery. They fully understand the quality of teaching and the link between pay and performance, enabling them to hold all staff to account for the progress children make. Governors have robust procedures to address underperformance should it occur. They take the advice of the local authority improvement adviser when setting the performance targets for the headteacher, linking these closely to school improvement and professional development. Governors regularly access training to keep themselves up to date with government guidance and to further improve their skills. They ensure that finances are used effectively to secure further improvements and that all statutory requirements are met, including arrangements to keep children and staff safe.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. School records, views expressed in the online parent questionnaire and informal discussions with parents confirm this view. No child has been prevented from attending the school because of poor behaviour. This is achieved because adults take great care to build trusting and respectful relationships with children. They listen carefully to them, helping them to understand their feelings.
- Parents and their children are welcomed warmly by staff at the beginning and end of each session. Parents often stay and talk informally to staff and help their child to settle. This secures a very positive and productive start to each session. Children quickly become familiar with the Nursery routines and settle in well. As a result, there is a calm atmosphere in Nursery and children listen and respond well to instructions.
- Children are able to take part in yoga sessions first thing in the morning. This effectively calms them and prepares them for the session. It gives them time to reflect on what lies ahead during the day and supports the development of their spiritual awareness.
- Throughout the Nursery, children demonstrate a thirst for learning and a determination to complete a task once they have started it. They are very proud of their achievements. For example, during the inspection a child persevered in writing a new letter shape correctly. When finally they succeeded, they leapt up beaming, shouting, 'I've done it!' This shows excitement in learning and helps to explain why children's achievement is outstanding.
- Children play exceptionally well together and because adults listen to them, they learn to listen to one another. In their play, there are lots of opportunities for them to learn to take turns, share and help one another. They understand why they need to take turns in some activities, and use the sand timer independently, to help them wait patiently for their turn.

- No opportunities are missed for children to develop their personal and self-help skills. For example, when putting on coats to go outside, or overalls to enter the 'mud kitchen', washing hands before and after preparing food, or scraping plates and stacking them neatly on the trolley at lunchtime.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding. At all times the children's physical well-being is given the highest priority. There are no recorded incidents of bullying or racism. Attendance is good and parents are quick to point out how much their children enjoy coming to school each day.
- Children feel safe and secure and their parents agree. Parents report that their children are very secure. They know not to allow any other parent into the Nursery and that they must use safe passwords if unknown adults are coming to pick up their children. Many parents were very keen to give their views about the school during the inspection. They were overwhelmingly positive, with many saying the school was like 'part of the family.'
- The excellent outdoor area provides an impressive range of challenging activities for climbing, balancing and crawling through tunnels. Children judge risk confidently when they are tackling these challenges. Children know how to use tools safely, such as when whittling with peelers and drilling willow sticks to produce blowpipes for bubble making.
- Advice and guidance for parents on safeguarding themselves and their children is displayed in the entrance area, along with the procedures and contact numbers to be used if they have any concerns. Staff are well aware of the procedures to follow to ensure children are suitably protected.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding over time and is never less than good. Staff foster nurturing relationships with all children. As a result, children feel valued and are confident learners. Adults have very high expectations of all children. School records, as well as evidence in children's learning stories and planning, confirm that teaching is of consistently high quality.
- All staff are highly skilled in responding to children's interests and individual needs and, as a result, all groups of children make outstanding progress and have very high levels of enthusiasm and engagement in their learning.
- There is a strong focus on developing children's communication and language skills right from the start. Staff are exemplary role models, describing, asking, questioning and giving children time to think and respond. This means children rapidly learn to speak and understand English. For example, children who arrive at school at the early stages of learning English are using full sentences by the end of their first term in the Nursery.
- The teaching of early reading and writing skills is very effective. Children enjoy the many opportunities they have to write and make marks, for example, when writing down appointments at the 'vets' in the imaginative play area. They have lots of opportunities to share books. They enjoy looking at them and talking about what is happening. They acted out the story of 'The Tiger who came to tea', in the small world area, using a tiger model and setting the tea table for four. They began to write their own version of 'I wrote to the zoo.' They identified the initial sounds of the names of animals and wrote these down. Others in the same activity used reference books to decide which animal to choose. Parents are successfully encouraged to share stories with their children.
- Children work regularly in smaller groups to develop their knowledge of letters and in a systematic way. Teachers make these sessions fun, so children engage in them very readily. During the inspection children were observed enjoying playing a game identifying which sounds letters make. They then practised writing these letters to make simple words. The most-able children, who knew their initial sounds, were given more challenging tasks, such as blending the letter sounds in unknown words and reading them correctly.

- Early mathematics skills are taught extremely well, with adults taking many opportunities to reinforce children's number skills during their play. Activities that are closely directed by an adult are well-planned and organised. Children are encouraged to use their problem solving skills, for example, during an activity where they needed to work out whether there were more boys than girls in the group. The teacher used every possible counting opportunity to ensure children made excellent gains in their understanding of more than and less than in a practical situation.
- Staff ensure that all children have a wide range of opportunities to develop their observational skills through their exploration of the world. For example, when painting detailed pictures of animals such as giraffes and elephants, children are challenged to describe in detail the unique features of each animal. They are then set problems, such as how to mix powder paints together to make the right colours when painting a picture.
- Children are encouraged to become independent learners. First thing in the morning they register themselves, write their name, and settle quickly onto a chosen activity. They know where the resources are stored and how to access them. At tidy up time, they all work together to put everything away, ready for the next session.

### The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- About half the children start in Nursery with basic skills that are below those typical for their age, particularly in aspects of communication and personal development, and in their early literacy and mathematical skills. A few children start with skills that are much lower than those typical of their age. By the time children leave for primary school, they have made outstanding progress, and most have basic skills and understanding that are similar to or better than those typically seen in children entering Reception. They are very well-prepared for primary school.
- The development of children's personal, social, literacy and mathematics skills are key priorities in the Nursery. Currently, children are making rapid progress in all areas and, after only half the school year, have already developed many important skills to make them effective learners.
- All groups of children make outstanding progress. Staff pay close attention to checking the progress of different groups to make sure that they all make excellent progress. They take action to ensure that any gaps in achievement are swiftly closed. For example, an achievement gap between boys and girls was identified and has now closed as the Nursery took effective action to rectify it. Similarly, achievement in mathematics was not as high as in other areas so the Nursery took effective action to ensure achievement in mathematics is now in line with the other areas of learning.
- Children from different ethnic backgrounds, and those who are in the early stages of learning English, make similar progress to other children because they are taught very well and their specific learning needs are met.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs do exceptionally well because the school acts quickly to identify their specific needs and ensures support enables the children to make outstanding gains in their learning. Staff are knowledgeable about how to adapt activities to meet their needs. Specialist advice is brought in when necessary and any support is quickly amended as necessary.
- The most-able children achieve well in all areas of their learning. Adults quickly identify who these children are, and make sure that the tasks they are given challenge them to think really hard

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109416
<b>Local authority</b>	Bedford
<b>Inspection number</b>	447942

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	55
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	J. Walker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Isabel Davis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 April 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 266520
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