

Alfreton Nursery School

Grange Street, Alfreton, DE55 7JA

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2015

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.

- Alfreton Nursery is a special place for children to learn. It is a warm and friendly school where everyone is welcomed and valued.
- The headteacher is an inspirational leader. She is ably supported by other leaders, a highly effective staff team and a supportive governing body. All have high expectations for the children in their care.
- Leaders, managers and governors know the school very well and constantly think hard about how to improve it further. They are determined to stay at the cutting edge of early years practice. This has enabled them to maintain outstanding teaching and achievement for a fifth inspection.
- The school has an excellent reputation within the local authority and is the hub of the community.
- Excellent relationships and a consistent approach to children's learning enable them to develop high levels of confidence and enthusiasm for school. They are extremely well prepared for starting primary school.
- Staff have high expectations, a nurturing manner and well-established routines to support children's outstanding behaviour. Children are right to feel very safe and secure in school.
- Teaching is outstanding. Thoughtfully planned activities mean that all children learn to the best of their ability. Exceptionally well-delivered activities promote excellent early reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- All children achieve exceptionally well in all areas of learning. Most children move on to their primary school with skills that are at least in line with, and often above, those expected for their age.
- The support provided for disabled children and those with special educational needs is exemplary. These children receive high-quality, individual programmes which enable them to be fully included in school life and make the same excellent progress from their starting points as other children.
- Parents are all extremely positive and delighted that their children can come to this Nursery. They value the warmth and respect with which everyone is treated. They are particularly pleased with how quickly their children become confident and independent.
- One parent summed up the views of others by saying, 'This Nursery cares and supports the families as much as they support the children.' However, as yet, not many parents are regularly contributing comments to their children's 'learning journals'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed children’s learning in nine sessions, or part sessions, including four jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, teachers, other members of staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. A session of the lunchtime arrangements was seen, and opportunities were taken throughout the inspection to talk to the children.
- The responses of 35 parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, were scrutinised and parents were spoken to as they brought their children to school.
- The inspector took into account the views expressed by the staff in the eight questionnaires they returned.
- The inspector looked at documentation including: data on children’s progress; the school’s evaluation of its strengths and areas for development; records of children’s work; planning records; records of the work of the governing body; reports on teaching; and documentation relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Mary Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized nursery school. The children all attend part time.
- The vast majority of families are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- No children in this age group are eligible for pupil premium funding.
- The school's senior leadership involves the headteacher and two other staff. There are no middle leaders.
- The school is an associate of the Derbyshire Partnership for Learning Teaching School, led by Ladycross Infant school.
- The school is part of Derbyshire's Open School network. This enables other teachers to visit the school regularly to observe teaching and learning.
- The school is involved in many projects. These include the 'REAL' project with other Derbyshire schools to support parents in understanding how children acquire literacy skills.
- The school is leading a project run in conjunction with the Early Excellence Centre in Huddersfield in introducing the Ferre Laevers Leuven scales for emotional well-being and children's levels of engagement in learning.
- The school is used as a base for Derby University when it is delivering its module on 'Learning Outside the Classroom' to teaching students.
- The school holds many awards including the British Council's International Award, UNICEF's Rights Respecting School Award, ECO School's 4th Green Flag, Healthy Schools Award and the IT Mark.
- The school has been recognised as a lead school in the network of Teaching Excellence in Computer Science.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Engage parents further in their children's learning by persuading all to contribute regular comments in 'learning journals' so that knowledge of children's development can be fully shared between home and school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides very clear, strategic and inspirational leadership to the Nursery. She is extremely well supported by other senior leaders and a knowledgeable staff team. There is exceptionally strong teamwork, with all staff determined to do the very best for the children in their care. This commitment leads to an extremely caring, nurturing ethos which enables children to thrive from outstanding teaching and to behave exceptionally well. The high ratio of adults to children makes a significant contribution to the excellent progress that children make.
- Staff have an excellent understanding of how young children learn because they are able to attend high-quality training. The school's involvement in a number of research projects, such as that into children's emotional well-being, has a very positive effect on staff knowledge, understanding and skills. Staff can identify how their practice has changed for the better because of their involvement. This means that children are receiving outstanding teaching at all times.
- The strong support for career progression can be seen, for example, in staff who have progressed from being volunteers or students to achieving high-level qualifications and taking on responsibility for an area of curriculum development in the Nursery. Consequently, staff morale is high, as indicated in the very positive feedback in staff questionnaires.
- The impact of the leaders' approach to ensuring equal opportunities for all children fosters excellent relationships and is reflected in the outstanding progress made by all groups of children. Children visiting regularly from the local special school are fully involved and included. There is no discrimination evident in the Nursery.
- The performance of all groups of children is tracked and analysed extensively. This means that leaders can immediately identify any children who might be at risk of falling behind, or any groups of children who may not be progressing as fast as their peers. Last year, some boys were making less progress than girls. Extra help and changes to the curriculum were introduced which resulted in the gap in progress quickly closing.
- The quality of teaching is regularly checked by leaders. Perceptive observations of teaching regularly challenge staff to reflect and improve on their performance and they do so. The performance of teachers is well organised and linked effectively to salary progression. All staff have targets that are linked directly to their role and aimed at helping them develop their professional skills. Staff are encouraged to take on new challenges that deepen children's learning. For example, one member of staff has developed the use of weekly baking sessions to help develop children's language and personal skills. Children were observed developing new vocabulary and gaining confidence in working with others as they made muffins.
- The extensive and varied curriculum promotes all aspects of literacy and numeracy extremely well. The many learning opportunities embrace children's own ideas and interests and are highly engaging. Outdoor learning is prominent. Further enhancements, for example, a visiting artist and musician, help to advance children's creativity, knowledge and understanding.
- The curriculum makes a strong contribution to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The United Nations charter for children's rights and responsibilities permeates policies and procedures, and, together with the school's International Schools work, helps children understand and celebrate differences and similarities with others and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The school forges extremely strong relationships with its parents. Informal information exchanges at the beginning and end of sessions, formal reviews of their children's progress and attendance at workshops are regular activities. Parents particularly value the twice-weekly 'drop-in' sessions, where they can share learning with their children, and the 'blog' written on the school's social-networking site page. Parents can regularly share their children's 'learning journals' through the school's website. However, only a few are currently contributing their own comments, for example, about their children's successes and achievements at home to inform staff of particular strengths or areas for discussion at school.

- Leaders ensure that the Nursery's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. There are close checks on all adults who work with the children. Training for staff and governors is thorough and up to date. Consequently, all parents are right to feel that their children are kept very safe.
- The local authority gives the school good support. It recognises the outstanding quality of the school's work and values what it does in supporting other schools in the local authority and beyond. The local authority has actively supported and encouraged the school in many of its research projects and helped bring them to a successful conclusion.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly effective in carrying out their role. They have been keen to continue to improve standards even further since the last inspection. To this end, a group of governors and the headteacher regularly visit other outstanding schools throughout the country to ensure that this Nursery can continue to offer excellent education to all. Governors are very proud of the school and know it very well. They correctly identify its strengths and development areas and are very pleased that it is used as an exemplar by the local authority. They are very supportive of the headteacher and staff and offer a good level of challenge. Governors have a good understanding of the data showing how the children are doing. Governors understand the quality of teaching and the importance of a clear link between pay and performance. They are mindful of the need to reward those members of staff who are very effective to maintain a high level of performance. They understand the performance management of staff and have effective procedures in place to manage underperformance. Their knowledge of financial management and curriculum development ensures the Nursery is effectively and efficiently resourced. They make sure that all statutory safeguarding requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. All learn to behave well, work independently, share resources and play fairly. They respond so well because adults are excellent role models for the children of how to behave and get along with others. There is an emphasis on thinking about and including 'our friends'. Children respond very well to the high expectations of staff.
- Children's enjoyment of learning is evident throughout the day. They show great enthusiasm in all activities. They settle quickly and sustain their concentration for lengthy periods of time. They make choices about their learning and show much confidence and independence when they need to. This is evident in their independent dressing for outdoor learning and in their signing-in on entry to school. Children persevere and display a 'can do' attitude. Their excellent attitudes to learning help the children to move confidently into primary school.
- Children are polite, friendly and treat each other kindly. Through the use of puppets, such as 'Respectful Rachel', staff help children to learn tolerance. Children are rewarded for showing fairness and friendship to others.
- Parents report that the children behave very well and run into school eagerly. Leaders report no exclusions, bullying or racist incidents. 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. Parents and carers agree absolutely with this judgement and are right to be very confident about leaving their children in school. Children feel very safe because of the strong bond they quickly feel with the adults looking after them.
- Children demonstrate a highly developed sense of safety when they move around the site, use wheeled vehicles and climb and balance on the play equipment. Staff encourage children to think about what they do so that they learn to manage tools and equipment safely. They understand the risks involved – for example, when cutting dough. They discuss how to handle the tools carefully, and how you can hurt yourself if you do not do this.

- Children are encouraged to experiment with managed risk, such as climbing trees. They understand that 'Handa's Magic Juice' is not to be drunk by them, but is only to be used to make food for animals. Children know the routines well, and tidy up at the end of a session, safely and sensibly working together to put the resources away.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Adults have very high expectations of all children. School records, children's 'learning journals' and staff planning of learning, confirm that teaching over time is of consistently high quality. Staff create a vibrant, exciting and positive environment and foster nurturing relationships with all children. As a result, children feel valued and are confident, independent learners who make excellent progress.
- A significant strength is the emphasis on children's acquisition of language skills. Every opportunity is taken to model language, reinforce and introduce new vocabulary and integrate songs and rhymes to develop communication and understanding. Signing, pictures, digital technology and artefacts are used well by staff to reinforce language. Daily group sessions include closely targeted teaching to develop language skills. Staff are exemplary role models in describing, asking, questioning and giving children time to think and respond. This means that children make rapid progress in their communication and language skills.
- Adults make learning fun. For example, during the inspection children took part in a treasure hunt to find the missing oranges hidden around the site, and made mixtures outdoors to feed the animals in the story, *Handa's Surprise*.
- The teaching of early reading and writing skills is very effective. A weekly story is used as the basis for the week's planning of learning. This practice is used to ensure that reading and writing opportunities are threaded throughout the curriculum. Children enjoy the many opportunities for mark making, for example, using paint and shaving brushes to make marks in water and sand. Targeted story-time sessions ensure that children develop a love of books and stories. Staff are skilled in questioning children to extend their understanding. For example, when reading *Room on the Broom*, the teacher asks the children about rhyming words and encourages them to explain the sequence of events in the story.
- Children work regularly in groups to develop their early phonic skills in a systematic way. (This is the teaching of the sounds that letters make.) During the *Squiggle Wiggle Disco*, children enthusiastically copied the teacher's excellent modelling of the formation of the letter 'p'. By the end of the session all the children knew some words beginning with 'p' and most could write it correctly.
- Early mathematical skills are taught extremely well, with adults taking many opportunities to reinforce children's skills during their play. Work with number is very well planned and organised for all groups of children. A wide range of exciting resources were used in one session to ensure that children gave their full attention to new learning. Treasure boxes, silver boxes of different size, puppets and 'magic headbands' were used to ensure that children made excellent progress in their counting and ordering skills.
- Support for disabled children and those who have special educational needs is highly effective. A large range of imaginative, additional help is used to support the children who need it. For example, the 'Loveheart Group' supports children with emotional needs, and the 'Yogabugs' group supports children in developing their physical skills. Children often work individually with staff to help them overcome their difficulties and to increase their achievement.
- The high level of attention staff pay to observing the children's learning means that all adults have a detailed knowledge of the children's interests, skills and progress. Very regular discussions between staff ensure that learning opportunities planned for each child are very well matched to each one's needs.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Almost all children start in the Nursery with skills that are often below those typical for their age, particularly in their communication, personal development, early literacy and mathematical skills. By the time children leave for primary school, they have made excellent progress, and most have skills and understanding that are at least similar to those of their age group. Many children exceed the level of development expected for their age. Many leave the Nursery with skills and understanding that are better than those typically seen in children entering Reception.
- As a result of the excellent progress children make in their personal, social and emotional development, they become confident, enthusiastic and independent learners who are well prepared for school life.
- Children make rapid progress in speaking skills, which staff encourage at every opportunity. Children's vocabulary is continually extended, for example, using the term, 'eco-system', when talking about the 'bug hotel' and pond area outdoors.
- Children show an excellent awareness of mathematical language as they talk about numbers in a sequence and the order in which events occurred in a story. Children make rapid progress in their mathematical development, both because of targeted work in groups and the skilful interweaving of skills, such as counting, matching and ordering, into everyday routines.
- All children make excellent progress in their early reading and writing skills. Activities, such as 'Dough Disco', combine great fun with learning simple writing patterns and developing necessary physical skills. The most-able children can write their own names and draw letter shapes.
- The most-able children are especially well challenged. They are encouraged to solve problems, ask their own questions and build up their knowledge and vocabulary. During one observed session, children talked competently about the term 'deforestation' and about what a rainforest is like. They showed great curiosity when a live tortoise from the rainforest was brought out to meet them. This helped develop their knowledge of the world even further.
- The support for disabled children, those with special educational needs and those who experience difficulties in their learning is very effective. Children's additional needs are identified early and extra help and support provided. The support that staff deliver enables these children to make outstanding progress from their, often, very low starting points.
- Children make particularly rapid progress in their physical development, with the majority reaching skills beyond those expected for their age when they leave. The exemplary outdoor areas help children become increasingly confident in challenging their bodies while running, jumping, climbing and balancing on different surfaces. The high-quality 'Forest School' areas enable children to make excellent progress in their skills in exploring, investigating and learning about the natural world.

The early years provision**is outstanding**

- All children in this school are in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The report sections above evaluate the school's effectiveness.

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	112485
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	449518

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Gill O'Hagan
Headteacher	Angela Stanton
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2011
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