

# Royal Spa Nursery School

Park Hill, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 0BT

**Inspection dates** 4–5 June 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

- The headteacher and the governors share a clear vision for making this an outstanding nursery. Since the previous inspection, good teaching has been further strengthened and standards have improved. This means that the nursery offers an excellent education to all the children who attend.
- Adults' expectations are high for all the children; this means they make rapid progress. Children who are capable of achieving the higher levels of development invariably do so as a result of the constant challenge built into the activities they are given.
- Nursery leaders have excellent systems for checking how well children are learning. This helps them to swiftly work out if something needs changing. For example, they have identified that a few children need more support at 'tidy-up time' and this has been provided.
- Adults are eager to improve and learn from each other, continuously sharing information about children's needs, interests and achievements, and using this in their planning. Their constant reflection about their own performance and the progress children make results in exceptional teaching and outstanding achievement.
- Activities are organised very carefully. Adults prompt children to use the resources they are provided with creatively and imaginatively. All this helps to extend children's learning and contributes strongly to their exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Children love learning. They revel in the range of exciting experiences available to them every day. They feel very safe and play and learn extremely well together. Minor disagreements are rare. Trusting relationships between adults and children result in excellent behaviour and attendance.
- The support and guidance provided for disabled children and those who have special educational needs as well as those at the early stages of learning English and their families is strong. Highly effective partnerships with other professionals ensure children's needs are met well.
- Governors are fully involved in the work of the nursery. They work tirelessly to support the school and its leaders. They are not afraid to ask challenging questions and expect to be provided with the information they need to check that children continue to learn exceptionally well.
- Parents are very pleased with the work of the nursery. As one parent said, speaking for the many, 'My child is always keen and even wants to come to school on their days off and often at the weekend too.'
- The nursery's positive partnership with other schools and settings has not yet been further extended, for the school to continue to build on the high quality practice already in place.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector spent approximately six hours observing children playing and learning in a wide range of activities, including activities led by adults and those which children had chosen for themselves. All observations were jointly observed with one or other of the headteachers.
- The inspector spoke to children about what they were learning, looked at school displays and sampled records of children's learning and their work.
- Documents were reviewed, including self-evaluation and improvement planning, documents related to safeguarding, minutes of governing body meetings and information on the progress children make.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body and school staff. A meeting took place with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector talked to 11 parents as they dropped off or picked up their children from school. In addition, she took account of the 18 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Recent surveys of parents carried out by the school were considered, as well as nine questionnaires completed by members of staff.

## Inspection team

Wendy Forbes, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Royal Spa is an average-sized nursery school. It offers 80 full-time-equivalent places. The majority of the children attend part-time, either five mornings or five afternoons, although some children attend for two full and one half day and others stay for additional paid-for sessions.
- There is also provision for 24 children aged two, which is registered separately and did not form part of this inspection.
- Most children stay at the nursery until they transfer to the Reception class in their chosen primary school.
- The majority of children are from a White British background. Of the children who are from other heritages there is no predominant group. Twenty languages are spoken. A small number of children are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.
- A smaller proportion of children than in most schools have special educational needs and disabilities.
- Because of their age, no children are eligible for the pupil premium, which is extra funding from the government for those children who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in care in the local authority.
- The school provides extra care for children through the lunch club.
- There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection, including the temporary two-term appointment of the school's improvement partner to the role of part-time, seconded headteacher sharing the post with the current substantive headteacher.

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

- Further strengthen the partnerships with local schools and settings and those farther afield, to continue to develop the high-quality early years practice already evident in the school even further.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- Staff and governors share the headteachers' determined vision of high-quality early years provision. Their expertise and close teamwork are a significant strength of the school. There is a relentless focus on improving the provision still further and building on already good levels of achievement. Consequently, children make rapid gains in their reading, writing and numeracy skills as well as in the other areas of learning.
- The strong staff team maintain an extremely close oversight of the quality of learning experiences offered to each child. During the day staff regularly reflect on how well each child is doing. Plans are systematically annotated and adapted so that learning is constantly enriched and supplemented, and children's rapid progress maintained. Any variances in the achievement of individual children are quickly identified and addressed.
- Middle leaders work very effectively with other members of staff. They regularly check that learning activities planned are consistently in line with children's needs in order to promote outstanding learning. This ensures that all staff correctly judge how well children achieve and that activities also provide challenge to those capable of more.
- The school's own evaluation of its work and plans for further improvement demonstrate leaders accurately assess the strengths of the nursery. Despite the high standards achieved, there is no sense of complacency. Such determination and aspirations have led to continuing improvements in teaching and the rise in achievements since the last inspection.
- Working closely together, school leaders have established a positive climate of high expectations, which encourages children to attend regularly and ensures they learn and behave exceptionally well. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated. The whole team is determined to ensure that children develop the skills, curiosity and resilience that will give them a strong foundation beyond their nursery school experience.
- The outstanding curriculum is carefully thought out to ensure that all children have exceptional opportunities across all seven required areas of learning.
- Children are excited by and thoroughly enjoy their learning. The topics and areas taught are imaginative and wide ranging and provide lots of opportunities for children to extend their learning and other aspects of their development, particularly their personal, social and emotional development. Children are regularly consulted about what they would like to learn and encouraged to plan their own learning. An excellent balance of activities and experiences is available across the day. Indoor and outdoor learning are equally valued, promoting many moments of absolute wonder, for example, when finding worms and tiny creatures in the mud-kitchen or discovering and trying on the Giant's enormous boots found in his willow tree castle.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very successfully promoted. The nursery capitalises on the children's rich heritage and explores festivals and celebrations that are relevant to them. In this way, children gain an understanding of similarities and differences between themselves and others, and develop tolerance. Children are helped very effectively to understand basic British values, such as fairness and respect for others.
- Leaders at all levels are highly successful in creating an atmosphere where everyone is included, valued and helped to flourish. Very individual support, such as providing a specific soft toy for a child to hold during a group-time activity or creating a personal picture book, means each child's needs are fully met and equality of opportunity is promoted extremely well. Parents are very positive about the level of care their children receive.
- Because of its strong performance, the school requires, and receives, minimal support from the local authority. Leaders have well-established links with local hub schools and settings and relish opportunities to share their good practice within the local authority network. These partnerships have not yet been further extended, to help all staff to share good ideas to improve even further.
- Safeguarding has a high priority in the nursery. Rigorous and effective policies and procedures ensure children's welfare and well-being are of high quality.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors bring a wide range of skills and experience that are relevant to the work of the school in all areas. Minutes indicate that governors closely check priorities in the school development plan, know how well the children are doing and ask important questions of school leaders. As a result, they are able to provide an excellent balance of support and challenge to the headteacher. In addition, this has helped ensure that the quality of teaching and children's achievement, now outstanding, has continued

to improve. Governors regularly spend time in the school, getting to know the children, staff and families. They undertake regular training to ensure they are up to date and have followed the guidance provided by the local authority when setting targets for the headteacher. Governors fully understand the quality of teaching and the need for a clear link between pay and performance. They manage finances very efficiently, making sure that money is spent wisely to support children's learning, including the completion of a recent building project to extend the nursery's provision to include two-year-olds. Governors have undertaken relevant safeguarding training to ensure that safeguarding requirements are very well met.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. They are gently and kindly helped to learn what is expected of them and to behave as part of a community. Children are encouraged to help one another by, for example, getting resources for another child or helping them to finish a task. They show excellent respect towards each other and all adults and visitors. Staff themselves provide excellent models of the levels of courtesy and kindness they expect from the children.
- Practitioners and children share the joy of learning together and celebrate children's successes with enthusiasm. This enjoyment of learning lays the foundations for children to become lifelong learners.
- Children with social, emotional, behavioural or special educational needs are expertly supported in taking a full part in all the nursery has to offer, as are those who are at the early stages of learning English. Space, resources and activities are designed to ensure that all children, whatever their needs or background, are being met.
- Parents wholeheartedly believe that children behave well and the nursery reports that there are no bullying or racist incidents.
- Transition into nursery and then into school is very carefully planned and helps to ensure children settle quickly and feel secure. Excellent relationships throughout the nursery also make a significant contribution to children's high levels of confidence.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding. There are extremely robust systems, such as signing in and out and electronic door locks, that make the site secure. Governors and staff regularly carry out risk assessments and think carefully about the deployment of staff to minimise potential risks. Surveys of parents show their confidence in the setting.
- There is a great emphasis on settling children and helping them to play together and share. Adults quickly and sensitively talk to children, showing and explaining safe behaviours such as turn-taking. This results in safe and trusting relationships between children and between children and adults. Children respond very well to adults' high expectations of good behaviour, which helps them stay safe.
- There is a strong focus on helping children to learn about their own safety. They very successfully learn to play and work safely in a range of contexts. For example, children are supported to use tools such as scissors carefully through cutting sticky tape when making models. In the outdoor area children climb large equipment and cross paths of different levels on their journey to the 'giant's castle'.
- Children feel safe and secure. Their parents agree and are overwhelmingly positive in their view of the nursery. Parents see the nursery as a place of safety and feel confident that they will receive non-judgemental help and support when they need it. Such comments as, 'We know this is a such special place where all our children are safe and looked after really well... they are known as individuals... staff are just brilliant.' Staff work effectively with other agencies and professionals to support more vulnerable families, which contributes to keeping children very safe.
- Although children do not have to attend nursery, there is a clear expectation that they attend regularly.

## The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because staff have exceptional understanding of how young children learn and develop, and are extremely reflective. They plan from children's experiences and interests how best to engage them in learning. This ensures that children make excellent progress.
- Staff watch children, carefully noting what they can do and what they are interested in. These notes are used to plan each day's activities, designed to interest children and help them learn more and make the most progress.

- A strength of the teaching is the dedicated time that staff provide for individual children, particularly for disadvantaged children, those who have additional needs and the small number at the early stages of learning English. Individual, well-tailored activities provided build children's confidence and enable them to move on rapidly in their learning.
- Staff routinely encourage children to persevere when in difficulty, work things out for themselves and experiment with different ways of doing things, and this significantly aids their development. For instance, in the mud kitchen, children were challenged to identify the mix of herbs through using their sense of smell. Staff regularly provide examples through stories of familiar creatures such as 'Have a go Mo' and 'Keep trying Tommy' of what to do when things get more difficult.
- Questioning is consistently strong because staff play alongside children and encourage them to talk through their thinking and develop their ideas. Staff encourage children to be inquisitive and to ask their own questions. Children are challenged to develop their own ideas. For example, a group of children experimented with frozen balloon ice-balls, hypothesing what would happen if they sprinkled salt on the ice-ball or injected a small amount of blue dye into the ball.
- The nursery is full of exciting things for children to play with and experience. Activities that arise when children choose for themselves often result in excellent learning through play. One such example involved a group of children using large plastic cups as tower blocks to build the largest and tallest structure possible.
- Staff excel at setting up the environment to maximise chances for learning. The main areas draw children in by offering tantalising opportunities to explore and develop skills, for example in mark making, observational drawing of bicycles and mixing of paints to paint pictures of flowers. All this encourages fine motor development. Outdoors, children have numerous opportunities to extend themselves physically but also to spend time quietly sharing books or engaging in conversation.
- The extensive grounds and garden area which have been planted and cared for by the children are used for a multitude of purposes, including room for country dancing and 'bug-hunting'. These areas, along with others such as the mud kitchen, where pies can be made, and the complex 'Giant's trail' to his castle, all regularly change to add further challenge to learning. There is plenty of space to fill water containers, make marks on concrete surfaces, balance and climb on large play equipment or run around with friends. It is a stimulating, unique place for children to learn.
- Children's imaginative skills are excellently fostered. For instance, through the telling of the 'Jack and the Beanstalk' story, children make decisions about whether Jack or the giant was at fault. Children re-enact the story with their friends, building confidence and language skills.
- Adults model language extremely well. The recently introduced and very effective daily 'Belonging time' provides opportunities for staff to sensitively introduce new vocabulary and opportunities to share ideas. This encourages children to join in conversations and for them to reflect on new learning.
- There is rightly a strong focus on developing communication and mathematical skills so that those children who start in the nursery with lower levels of typical skills across areas such as speech, language and number benefit from well-tailored activities. Staff make many amendments to activities in order to encourage use and development of communication and language. This successfully supports children to develop their understanding and become more confident in using a continually broader vocabulary and use of number. Staff are excellent at commenting on children's activities to provide good models for children's speaking and listening.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are well promoted across all areas of learning. For example, children are encouraged to sound out the rhythm of their name using the rhyme 'Fee, Fi, Foe, Fum' and to count on as Jack climbs the beanstalk. This helps them later to link letters to sounds and to understand the progression of number. Children were seen having great fun as early mathematical skills were cleverly taught in the measuring and making of red play-doh, as spoonfuls of ingredients were carefully measured.
- The teaching of disabled children, those who have additional needs and any at the early stages of learning English is exemplary. Staff have an excellent understanding of these children's barriers to learning and ensure that teaching is presented in small steps that are achievable. Personalised activities and resources for each child ensure progress is at an appropriate pace for their individual stage of development.

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- Most children start school with skills broadly in line with those typically seen at their age, although levels of communication, social and number skills can sometimes vary. Since the last inspection, achievement has continued to improve so that all children make rapid and sustained progress in all areas of their learning and development. Most children leave the nursery with levels that are better than those typically

found for their age in individual aspects of their learning. Increasing proportions of children exceed these expectations in all the areas of development.

- Children make rapid and sustained progress because of the strengthened, now outstanding, teaching and high-quality nurturing relationships. Alongside these, the exceptionally well-planned and -resourced environment, the exciting curriculum and the very effective use of the school's excellent outdoor environment all contribute to helping children achieve so well..
- Children from all groups make very good progress. This is because staff know the children well, which helps them plan effectively for the next steps in learning. For example, support is very effective for those learning English as an additional language, through using children's favourite interests.
- The school values the heritage and language of every family, and ensures children are given individual support when they need to help them learn rapidly. Children are provided with familiar words that are important to them from their first language to ease the transition from home to nursery. Staff liaise very well with other agencies to ensure that these children and their families receive the help that is available to support their development. This all ensures that those who are new to learning English make excellent progress during their time at nursery school.
- The most able children achieve very well as a result of skilful questioning by staff. Carefully designed activities allow these children to think more deeply and extend their vocabulary. For example, children were challenged to consider how many different sized cups of water would be needed to fill the various sizes of the giant's teapots.
- Children with special educational needs and disabilities make excellent progress because they are effectively supported. Through all the carefully planned opportunities, very skilful support and challenge from staff, children develop confidence and a 'have-a-go' attitude.
- All this means that all children, including those who have additional needs or are at the early stages of learning English, are very well prepared for the next stage of their education at primary school.

## 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> | 114351            |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Brighton and Hove |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 449467            |

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> | 79                                  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                  |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Jean Tothill                        |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Sybilla True                        |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 26–27 January 2012                  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01273 607480                        |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | N/A                                 |
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