

# Walton Lane Nursery School and Children's Centre

Walton Lane, Nelson, Lancashire BB9 8BP

**Inspection dates** 24–25 May 2016

**Overall effectiveness** **Outstanding**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- As a result of outstanding leadership, Walton Lane Nursery School has made significant improvements since the last inspection.
- The headteacher is a visionary leader who is uncompromising in her drive to improve outcomes for children. She is ably supported by her senior nursery teacher and talented staff team.
- Children and their families are at the heart of everything that happens at the school. Every child is recognised as an individual and their uniqueness is respected.
- Teaching is of the highest standard. Staff have a deep understanding of children's skills, understanding and interests.
- Assessment information is used expertly to plan exciting activities, which are fun and move children's learning on at a pace.
- From their different starting points all groups of children, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, make excellent progress and achieve very well.
- Children feel very safe and are confident and inquisitive learners.
- Outdoor learning is very well promoted, particularly through 'forest school'-type activities at a nearby woodland area.
- Collaborative working is a strength of the Nursery. Staff work well with local schools and share their excellent knowledge and skills with a small number of early years providers to help them develop their knowledge and skills. However, more early years providers have yet to benefit from this sharing of excellent practice.
- During their time at the Nursery, most children grow into youngsters who are brimming with confidence and who work and play harmoniously together.
- Behaviour is impeccable. Children clearly know the standard of behaviour that is expected of them. They are kind and thoughtful to each other.
- Most parents are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work. They typically comment that their children make 'excellent progress and are taught well'.
- Governors are passionate about the school and know it well. They are extremely supportive of the headteacher and act as a critical friend. However, although they do hold the school to account for most aspects of its work, the level of challenge is not as rigorous as it could be.

## Full report

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

- Further develop the expertise of the governing body by providing opportunities for governors to analyse raw data independently of the headteacher to ensure that they offer the highest level of challenge to the school.
- Extend the arrangements for the sharing of the nursery school's excellent practice with more early years providers so that more children start in primary school ready to learn.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher, supported by her senior nursery school teacher, has created a very strong culture, which puts children's academic achievement and their complete well-being at the centre of everything the school does. Working closely with the rest of their talented staff team, they create high expectations for themselves and the children they teach.
- The headteacher is never complacent and is relentless in her pursuit of excellence. She is not afraid to make changes and these are conveyed to staff gently, but firmly. Staff work very well as a team and share the headteacher's resolve that every child is unique and should achieve to their full potential while at the school.
- Senior leaders are crystal-clear about the school's strengths and what else it needs to do to drive the school onwards and upwards. The school's main priorities are clearly set out in the school development plan. These are also displayed prominently in the reception area as a source of information for parents. Stringent procedures are in place to ensure that targets are regularly monitored and reviewed.
- The quality of teaching delivered by all staff, and the progress that all groups of children make, is monitored very closely. Performance management for all staff is highly effective. Staff access regular training, which is tailored to individual needs and linked to school priorities. As a result, teaching skills are kept fresh and up to date, which helps accelerate children's progress.
- The headteacher nurtures talent within her staff team exceptionally well. For example, key members of her team have been given responsibility to plan and make further improvements to the outdoor area.
- Additional government funding is used very well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are given an equal chance to thrive and take part in all the school has to offer. The money has been spent employing a 'project worker' whose role is to support these children academically and break down any barriers to learning.
- Most notable is the design of the curriculum, which is rich and varied, and successfully promotes fundamental British values. There is a real emphasis on developing learning outdoors. Children are encouraged to play, explore, persevere and think critically, which are all skills that children need to develop in order to learn. Trips within the locality and visitors to the school further enrich and extend children's experiences.
- The school works exceptionally well with other schools to share good practice and challenge each other. Staff have also worked with a small number of early years providers in the local area to share their expert knowledge. However, this has not been extended to other early years settings in the wider locality.
- The local authority knows the school exceptionally well and is supportive of the headteacher. It recognises that the school is a model of excellence and that the headteacher has 'put her own stamp' on the nursery. They have provided her with effective advice and guidance.
- Parents are resounding in their praise for the staff, the quality of teaching and the well-being of their children. They really appreciate the weekly email which gives them details of what their children will be doing at nursery the following week and how, as parents, they can support this learning at home.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors are very knowledgeable about the school and are proud of its achievements. They have every confidence in the headteacher and her ability to drive the school to even higher levels. Together with the local authority, they set her challenging but realistic targets. They undertake regular training and ensure that finances are very well managed. Responsibilities with regard to safeguarding are taken very seriously. Governors challenge and hold the school to account for many aspects of its work. However, they do not analyse performance information independently of the headteacher. As a result, the level of challenge that the governors give to senior leaders is not as high as it could be.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All the required checks for staff and visitors are in place. The school site is very secure. Parents commented to the inspector that 'It is like getting into Fort Knox.' Staff have a secure understanding of what to do should they be concerned about a child's welfare. They also talk with confidence about risks such as radicalisation, extremism and female genital mutilation. No mobile phones are used around the school and children are made aware of e-safety.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- All staff have a secure understanding of the underlying principles of early years education and of the importance of learning through play. They are deeply reflective about how children learn and share best practice with each other.
- Staff are exceptionally well deployed throughout the day and spend all their time interacting with the children to develop their learning.
- Activities are fun, very well planned and linked to children's interests. Routines are well established and this ensures that there is a consistency of approach throughout the school. Not a minute of learning time is wasted and there is an excellent balance between activities which are led by adults and those which are decided by children.
- Highly skilled staff use questioning which effectively challenges and deepens children's learning. For example, ice placed in the water tray had begun to melt and staff asked the children, 'What has happened to the ice?' Children replied, 'It has melted.' Staff then encouraged them to think more deeply by asking, 'Why has it melted?' Children thought for a while and replied, 'It has melted because it is warm.' The level of challenge increased as staff then asked the children to touch the ice and describe how it felt. Children replied, 'It feels cold.' Learning was then extended even further when staff asked, 'Can you think of another word for cold?' and children shouted out with delight, 'Freezing!'
- Children are developing a real love of reading. Books are prominently displayed in the learning environment and are easily accessible to the children. Children enjoy reading on their own for pleasure, sharing a book with a group of friends or listening to a story read by staff. Children handle books with care and turn the pages correctly. They are aware that print carries meaning and some are becoming aware of basic book terminology.
- Many children can confidently sound out the letters in their name and identify the initial sounds of objects that are familiar to them.
- Children are keen writers. Mark-making materials are available both indoors and outside and take into consideration the interests of boys. Children are also learning about writing for a purpose as they complete a register. Displays of children's work show that they can form recognisable letters and words. The most able can write the days of the week, correctly punctuated with capital letters.
- Mathematical concepts are very well explored as children play. For example, children are encouraged to solve problems, estimate, count in sequence, add and subtract.
- Outdoor learning is well promoted, but most notably through 'forest school'-type activities which children clearly relish. They develop many aspects of their learning outdoors as they use tweezers to look for wiggly worms, make a sleigh from string, a den using sticks and, under appropriate supervision, climb trees and toast marshmallows over an open fire. Such wonderful experiences contribute significantly to the excellent progress that children make.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote children's personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Children have a real thirst for knowledge. They are very keen to learn, settle well to their activities and display high levels of confidence and concentration.
- Children are very kind to each other, share and take turns. They take the time to listen to each other and value each other's contribution. For example, at snack time, children sit happily at table eating their snack and chat about matters that are of importance to them.
- Children feel very secure with their key person. This tight bond, which is established between the key person and parents, is pivotal in the personal development of the children.
- Every opportunity is taken to teach children about keeping themselves safe. For example, they learn the importance of wearing a seat belt, of exiting the building safely in the event of a fire and of not talking to strangers.
- The importance of personal safety is exceptionally well exemplified when children take part in forest school activities. For example, children confidently told the inspector that they must not touch nettles or holly bushes and must take care to avoid low-level branches on trees when running around.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Children are exceptionally polite, well mannered and very clearly understand what acceptable behaviour is. Visitors to the school are provided with a warm reception and made to feel very welcome.
- Any minor altercations are handled by staff in a calm and sensitive manner. However, because children are so busy, squabbles are very rare.
- Staff are excellent role models and share warm and respectful relationships with the children.
- Staff take great care to constantly celebrate children's achievements, which helps to promote their confidence and self-esteem.
- Attendance fluctuates for a number of justifiable reasons and within this age group is non-statutory. However, the school ensures that parents are made aware of the importance of regular attendance in readiness for children's transfer to Reception. Any absences are diligently followed up.

## Outcomes for pupils

## are outstanding

- Children come into the nursery with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age. However, a number of children face significant challenges with regard to their social, communication and language skills. From their different starting points, all groups of children make rapid progress and a significant number of children leave the nursery with skills and knowledge that exceed those typical for their age. This represents outstanding progress and ensures that children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The headteacher of a local primary school commented to the inspector that 'Children from Walton Lane Nursery School come into my school streets ahead of the others.'
- Children make significant gains in their communication and language skills. Staff model the correct use of language exceptionally well and conversation flows freely as children play and learn. Some children use a wide range of vocabulary that reflects the breadth of their experiences. For example, during the inspection, a child told the inspector about her dog. She named the breed of the dog and gave a detailed explanation about why it only had one eye. Another child eloquently explained to the inspector that 'A cat is different to a tiger because it is smaller and a different colour.'
- As the result of a highly effective key-person system, staff know their groups of children exceptionally well. They have a full and detailed understanding of their needs and the progress of each child. Assessments are frequent and accurate. Consequently, the most able children are very quickly identified and given tasks that challenge and deepen their learning.
- Children entitled to early years pupil premium funding perform just as well as their peers. Well-focused support using this funding has ensured that there are no significant gaps in attainment between this group of children and others in the nursery. Such good practice also demonstrates the nursery school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- A growing number of children from Eastern Europe have started at the nursery. For many of these children, English is a strange language. However, as a result of a nurturing and caring approach from staff and effective bilingual support, these children very soon grow in confidence and flourish during the time at Walton Lane Nursery School.
- Taking into consideration their very diverse needs, children who have special educational needs or disability make very good progress. This is due to high-quality teaching, swift interventions and close working relationships with outside agencies.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119079
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10011645

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<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>	103
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Anita Spokes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jan Holmes
<b>Telephone number</b>	01282 613437
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.waltonlane.org">www.waltonlane.org</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:head@waltonlane.lancs.sch.uk">head@waltonlane.lancs.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30–31 January 2013

## Information about this school

- This is an averaged-sized nursery school.
- The headteacher and governing body are also responsible for the on-site children’s centre. The ‘Rocking Horse Club’ early years setting is also on the same site.
- The children’s centre and early years setting did not form part of this inspection and are subject to separate inspection arrangements.
- Most of the children are of White British heritage. However, there is growing number of children from Eastern Europe. Some of these children have English as an additional language.
- The proportion of children known to be eligible for the early years pupil premium is broadly in line with the national average. This additional funding is to support children who are looked after by the local authority and for those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The number of children who have special educational needs or disability is broadly in line with the national average.
- A new headteacher was appointed in January 2015. She also supported the school for two days a week for one year prior to her permanent appointment.
- A new chair of the governing body has been appointed since the last inspection.
- Children attend the nursery school on a flexible part-time basis, either mornings or afternoons.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning at various times during the two days of the inspection. The headteacher observed one of these sessions jointly with the inspector.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff and parents.
- Telephone conversations were held with the headteacher from a local primary school and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector listened to children read.
- The school's work was analysed and the inspector looked at a range of school documents, including the school improvement plan and records relating to the quality of teaching. Documentation relating to attendance, safeguarding and the tracking of children's progress were also scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Sheila Iwaskow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2016

