

Crossens Nursery School

Preston New Road, Southport, Merseyside, PR9 8PA

Inspection dates

20–21 June 2017

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

- Crossens Nursery School is a really special place for children to learn. The new headteacher, ably supported by her talented lead teacher and staff, has driven change relentlessly, at a speedy rate.
- The governing body holds senior leaders to account robustly, with a clear focus on improving outcomes for children.
- Children are at the heart of everything that happens at this school. Every child is recognised as a unique individual.
- Teaching across all areas of the school is excellent. Exemplary teamwork underpins the school's success in improving outcomes for children. Everyone plays their part in delivering high-quality teaching.
- From their different starting points, all groups of children, including disadvantaged and the most able, make good or exceptional gains in their learning and achieve well.
- Children are charming, beautifully behaved, exceptionally polite and a credit to the school and their parents.
- Learning at this school is active and fun. No learning time is wasted. Assessment is expertly used to plan activities which are tailored to meet the needs of all groups of children.
- Collaborative working is a real strength of the school. Staff work well with a small number of schools and early years providers to help them to develop their knowledge and skills. However, more early years providers and schools have yet to benefit from this sharing of excellent practice.
- Parents are effusive about the school and the 'exceptional progress' that their children make. They typically comment about the 'fantastic' leadership qualities of the headteacher and the unique skills of each and every member of the teaching staff.
- Although the headteacher keeps a very close eye on the quality of teaching, the feedback given to teachers after observations of teaching and learning at times lacks detail with regard to the progress that different groups of children make.
- The school is used by the local authority as an exemplar of excellent practice.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the feedback given to teachers after observations of teaching and learning provides more information about the progress that the different groups of children are making.
- Extend the arrangements for the sharing of the nursery school's excellent practice with more early years providers and schools in the locality and beyond.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The school is exceptionally well led and managed. Working with her talented staff team, the headteacher never stands still and is constantly looking at ways to improve provision. As a result of her ambition, the school has improved rapidly since the last inspection. The school provides a warm and welcoming environment where children and staff flourish.
- Staff are very proud to work at the school and morale is high. They share the headteacher's vision of the school, which puts children's academic achievement and their well-being at the heart of everything that the school does.
- The headteacher nurtures talent within her staff team exceptionally well. Through her support and encouragement staff feel empowered to develop their roles.
- The headteacher knows her school very well and her self-evaluation is accurate and honest. School priorities are set out clearly in the school development plan and are monitored regularly.
- The headteacher keeps an eagle eye on the quality of teaching delivered by all staff. This is done in variety of ways, such as through formal lesson observations, learning walks, planning reviews and learning journal scrutiny. However, the feedback given to teachers after observations of teaching and learning does not focus sharply enough on the progress that different groups of children are making.
- Teachers flourish through targeted training opportunities that influence their practice. By observing each other, as well as observing effective practice at other schools, their teaching skills are kept fresh and up to date.
- The well-considered spending of the early years pupil premium funding makes a difference to the achievement of disadvantaged children and allows them to take part in all that the school has to offer. A large part of the funding is used to increase staffing levels to allow children to achieve academically. Such effective practice demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- The special educational needs funding is spent equally well. The money is used mostly to provide academic and emotional support to ensure that the specific needs of this group of children are met in sharing an inclusive environment.
- Strong emphasis is put on working collaboratively with others. For example, the school has forged links with other nursery schools in Sefton to offer support and challenge to each other. Links have also been established with a small number of schools and other early years providers in the locality and beyond, to provide training and support. Students from Edge Hill University do placements at the school to learn from the best early years practice. However, not enough early years providers and schools in the local area and beyond are benefiting from the shining example of early years practice at Crossens Nursery School.
- Parents hold the school in the highest regard. They are resounding in their praise of staff, the quality of teaching and the well-being of their children, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents greatly appreciate the wide

range of opportunities that the school gives them to take an active part in their children's learning. They talked very positively about the transition arrangements into the nurse and on to primary school, and described them as 'effective'.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and ignites children's passion for learning. It is enhanced by a wonderful range of trips and visitors to the nursery. These help to broaden children's experiences and develop their life skills. Children also learn about other faiths and cultures through a varied range of meaningful experiences. British values are very firmly embedded in all aspects of the school's work.
- The local authority uses this school as an exemplar of good practice to others. They admire the fact that the headteacher wants to be challenged consistently and is also very willing to accept advice, guidance and support.

Governance of the school

- Governors bring a varied range of experiences to their roles, with many from an educational background. They are fully aware of their strategic role with regard to the management of the school. There is no question about their dedication to the school or of their desire to ensure that each child achieves to the very best of their ability.
- Governors are highly knowledgeable. They have a very good awareness of the school's many strengths and are proud of its achievements.
- As regular visitors to the school, governors have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching and of the progress that different groups of children make, including those who are disadvantaged.
- Governors are very supportive of the headteacher. They act as a critical friend, offering high levels of support and challenge in equal measure.
- Governors take their safeguarding duties very seriously and have ensured that a safeguarding audit has been completed.
- The budget is very well managed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pre-employment checks, carried out on all staff, are comprehensive and information held in staff files is sufficiently detailed and held securely. Leaders work well with parents and other stakeholders to make sure that all children are well supported and kept safe.
- Staff receive regular training to make sure that everyone understands their responsibility to keep children safe. Regular updates are provided and information on safeguarding is displayed around the school.
- Those with responsibility for safeguarding have been trained at an appropriate level. Staff are confident in knowing what to do if they have any concerns about a child, including for signs of extremist or radical views.
- The premises are safe and secure. Visitors' credentials are closely checked. At the time of the inspection the single central record was compliant and there were no breaches

of the welfare requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Adults have an excellent understanding of how children learn best and of the underlying principles of early years education. Activities are planned meticulously, linked to children's interests and adapted to meet the differing abilities of each child.
- Learning at this school is magical and fun. Children are very secure with the routines that operate within the nursery. They relish in the structure of the day with the balance of free-play activities and those led by adults.
- The quality of the learning environment, both indoors and outside, is superb. Resources are of high quality and accessible to the children, allowing them to make independent choices about their play. The environment is rich with print; books are beautifully displayed. This fosters children's love of reading effectively.
- Staff work well together and are exceptionally well deployed. All of their time is spent interacting and observing the children as they learn and questioning them effectively. This was exemplified during group activities where a member of staff asked a series of probing questions to develop children's understanding of addition, subtraction and rhyming words.
- Staff make very good use of their voices, facial gestures and body language to capture and sustain the interest of the children.
- Language skills are exceptionally well promoted. There is a real buzz of conversation as children learn and play. Staff model the correct use of language and encourage the children to use more complex words and sentences. While playing outdoors, children giggled with delight as they talked eloquently to the inspector about the mallard that was nesting in the outdoor area. They went on to explain that the duck was sitting on some eggs, but they were not allowed to look into the nest in case they disturbed her. They could, however, listen to see if there was any noise to indicate that ducklings had hatched from the eggs.
- Children's physical skills are developing very well. For example, children handle small tools, such as scissors and rollers with increasing control. They show a very good awareness of space as they run around in the fresh air, taking care not to bump into each other. They are learning to move their bodies in different ways as they balance on logs, jump in and out of tyres and crawl through the tunnel.
- Children are becoming keen writers. A wide range of mark-making materials are available, which appeal to both boys and girls. Children are also beginning to write for a purpose as they use diaries to make appointments for patients in the doctor's surgery and write letters. Examples of writing displayed shows that some children form letters, spell key words and punctuate sentences correctly.
- As they play, children have many opportunities to enhance their creativity. They have worked with a resident artist and have created some wonderful models of dragons and butterflies which are displayed around the nursery. Outdoor activities at a nearby woodland area also provide many opportunities to use natural resources in a creative and imaginative way.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote children's personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Children's care and welfare are of the highest priority in school. Relationships between staff, children and parents are very strong. Consequently, children feel safe and are extremely safe.
- Children are very confident, articulate and self-assured. Their joy at coming to school is evident from the moment they walk through the door. Without a backward glance, they say goodbye to their parents and walk happily into the classroom, chatting with staff and their friends.
- Children display a real thirst for knowledge and are very keen to learn. They are learning to persevere with tasks and are becoming resilient learners.
- Children's achievements are constantly celebrated as part of the daily routine through verbal praise and displays of their work. Such effective practice promotes children's confidence and self-esteem successfully.
- Every opportunity is taken to develop children's awareness of safe practices. As children play, they learn about the importance of tidying up to keep the classroom environment safe. Road safety and the dangers of talking to strangers are areas of safety that staff reinforce constantly. Representatives from the fire and police service come into school and talk to the children about personal safety.
- Children are well nourished through the provision of healthy snacks. Fresh drinking water is available to ensure that children keep themselves hydrated throughout the day.
- A filtering system is in place, ensuring that children are kept safe when they are on the computer or the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Children are exceptionally polite, well-mannered and they clearly understand the standards of behaviour that are expected of them. Visitors to the school are given a very warm welcome by both the children and staff.
- Any minor altercations are handled by staff in a calm and sensitive manner. However, because children are so busy, squabbles are rare.
- The school does everything possible to encourage parents to bring their children to school. The importance of regular attendance is given a high profile. Any unexplained absences are followed up diligently, regardless of the fact that children attending the nursery are of non-statutory age.

- More children are now coming into school with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. However, there are still a number of children who face challenges with their social, communication, physical, literacy and mathematical development.
- As a result of excellent teaching, children make rapid gains in their learning from their different starting points. A significant number of children leave the nursery and join Reception with knowledge and skills that are well above those expected for their age. This represents outstanding progress. Consequently, children are very well prepared for their transition into primary school as happy, confident children.
- The headteacher of a local feeder school told the inspector that the social, communication, physical, literacy and mathematical skills of the children at this nursery 'shine through'.
- A very detailed analysis is kept of the progress that different groups of children are making. If any underachievement is identified, the wheels are very quickly put in motion to reverse the trend. For example, it was noted that the boys were performing less well than the girls. The planning of activities was revised to ensure that they appealed much more to boys' interests. As a result, the gap in outcomes between boys and girls is closing quickly.
- There has been a concerted effort to develop children's phonics skills since the last inspection. This has had a high degree of success. Staff now take every opportunity to encourage children to identify letters, sounds and words. Some pupils who learn more quickly and confidently use their phonics knowledge to sound out some quite complex words such as 'trampoline'.
- The needs of the most able pupils are very well met. Children are taught in ability groups for literacy and mathematics as well as phonics. This ensures that activities are pitched at the correct level to challenge children and drive their learning forward at a pace.
- Although low in number, disadvantaged children make the same very good progress as their peers in school.
- Taking into consideration their very diverse needs, children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong gains in their learning. This is due to the first-class support they receive, timely interventions and effective partnership with outside agencies.

School details

Unique reference number	104845
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10032219

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.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Evans
Headteacher	Mrs Suzanne Payne
Telephone number	01704 228624
Website	www.crossensnursery.co.uk
Email address	admin@crossensnursery.sefton.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is an averaged-sized nursery school.
- The school is located on a campus with a primary school and two special schools.
- There is a breakfast and lunch club, which are run by the governing body of the school.
- The very large majority of children are of White British heritage.
- Some children attend the school all day, while others attend two and a half days a week or five half-day sessions.
- The proportion of children known to be eligible for the early years pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is

below the national average.

- The proportion of children who have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs is also lower than the national average.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and chair of governors have been appointed.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning at various times during the two days of the inspection. The headteacher carried out one joint observation with the inspector.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, lead teacher, staff and parents.
- The inspector also met with members of the governing body, senior leaders from a local primary school and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector listened to children read and looked at examples of their work in their learning journals and on display.
- The school's work was analysed and the inspector looked at a range of documentation, 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 was also considered.
- Account was also taken of the Ofsted online questionnaires completed by staff and parents.

Inspection team

Sheila Iwaskow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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