

Oakengates Childrens Centre

The Place, Limeswalk, Oakengate, Telford, Shropshire TF2 6EP

Inspection dates

26–27 September 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and children

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good across the school. Consequently, some children do not make as much progress as they should.
- Some staff do not assess what children can do well enough and, therefore, do not provide learning activities which meet their needs. This limits children's progress, especially that of the most able.
- On occasions, staff do not give children enough time to express their own thoughts and ideas. As a result, children are not able to show what they can do and what they need to learn next.
- Some staff lack a clear understanding of what children should be able to achieve at any particular age. Therefore, they do not support and challenge children well enough to reach their full potential.
- Phonics teaching is inconsistent across the school so some children do not make enough progress in developing their early reading skills.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of how well different groups of children achieve. However, leaders do not track the progress of the most able children in sufficient detail and are unclear about the progress of this group.
- Middle leaders new to their roles are still developing their leadership skills.
- Leaders track daily attendance very closely to check the whereabouts and safety of absent children. However, leaders do not yet have sufficient information about overall patterns of attendance.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher knows every aspect of the school's strengths and weaknesses in detail. Her passion and determination has brought the staff together to work as a team. Consequently, she is successfully driving rapid improvements in the school.
- Governors hold all leaders to account for the school's performance very well.
- The external adviser provides effective support which is helping the school to improve quickly.
- Children are very well cared for. All staff ensure that children's safety is of paramount importance. Children are happy, safe and settle well in school.
- Very positive relationships exist between staff and children. Children behave very well because staff are skilled at helping them to manage their own behaviour.
- Disadvantaged children and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including in phonics, by ensuring that staff:
 - use effective questioning to develop children’s learning
 - provide children with sufficient time to express their own thoughts and ideas before intervening in their learning
 - make accurate assessments of what children can do and then plan learning activities that build securely and progressively on previous learning, especially for the most able children
 - develop their subject knowledge and understanding of the expectations of what children should be able to achieve at each stage of their development.
- Further improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - making sure that leaders at all levels, particularly those new to their roles, receive support and training to develop and extend their responsibilities
 - making more detailed checks on the progress of the most able children
 - continuing to develop more detailed information about children’s attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school federated with Wrockwardine Wood Infant and Nursery School in April 2016. Since this time, there have been significant changes in staffing, including in the leadership of the school. The executive headteacher has managed these changes sensitively, while ensuring that all necessary actions are taken to improve the school quickly.
- The executive headteacher quickly and accurately identified the most significant weaknesses at the time of federation. Carefully targeted action plans addressed many of the key weaknesses swiftly, which stemmed the decline in the school's performance. However, she recognises that while substantial improvements have been made, there has not been enough time since federation to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good across the school.
- The executive headteacher is highly committed to driving further improvements within the school and is providing inspirational leadership. Her passion and determination has drawn together a staff team that has a shared commitment and vision to improve outcomes for all children.
- All leaders contribute to school improvement planning. They accurately identify the school's strengths and where weaknesses remain. They develop clear action plans to improve teaching and learning and children's outcomes, and check carefully that the actions are having an effect. However, some leaders are new to their roles and are still developing the skills to be highly effective in their areas of responsibility.
- Leaders have high expectations of all staff. Support and training is carefully matched to staff's needs through the effective use of the appraisal systems. Staff are encouraged to learn from one another through sharing good practice. Staff appreciate the guidance and support they receive. Although significant improvements have been made to the quality of teaching and learning over the last year, leaders have accurately identified what additional support and training is required to drive further improvements in this area.
- The curriculum provides children with a good range of interesting learning experiences. Activities are planned carefully to ensure that children have opportunities to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural learning. For example, the school celebrates the different cultural backgrounds of the children. They learn about religious festivals from a range of faiths and they make and eat food from countries around the world. 'Awe and wonder' is developed through the use of the school's garden. Children watch the changes as the apples grow and then use the fruit to make pies and crumbles. Football coaches help to develop children's physical skills and engage them in active play.
- Leaders ensure that raising children's awareness of fundamental British values is threaded through the curriculum. For example, staff encourage children to show respect for one another and model good manners such as turn taking and saying 'please' and 'thank you'. Children are supported to make decisions for themselves. As a result, staff prepare children well for life in modern Britain.

- Leaders make effective use of the additional funding to support disadvantaged children in a variety of ways. A learning mentor supports families. This includes helping parents access family learning opportunities to help them support their child's learning at home. Children are given additional speech and language support when needed, and there is a high focus on supporting their social and emotional needs. Therefore, the vast majority of disadvantaged children are making progress in line with their capabilities and, in some cases, more rapid progress.
- Additional funding to support children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also used effectively. Leaders identify children whom they have concerns about quickly. They work with specialist agencies, such as speech and language therapists, to identify the support needed. Leaders check carefully that this support helps children make better progress. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress across the school.
- Transition arrangements are highly effective. Leaders go to great lengths to ensure that children are well prepared to start school. Children move on to a number of different schools and leaders meet with the new teachers to ensure that all information about the children is passed on. Additional visits for vulnerable children or children who have additional needs are arranged. Leaders also provide parents with detailed information about the school's routines, curriculum and expectations when children move into the 'toddler' class at Oakengates Childrens Centre. This means that children settle quickly and happily into their new settings.
- Leaders ensure that partnerships with parents are a high priority. All staff make sure that parents are provided with daily information about their child's experiences. Regular newsletters inform parents of school activities. Parents are actively encouraged to contribute to their child's learning and value highly the learning journals they receive when their child leaves school. Parents speak very highly of the communications they receive from the school.
- Leaders use an external consultant to help drive school improvement. This support is highly effective and has helped leaders to identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. He supports leaders to ensure that school development actions are improving outcomes for children.
- The local authority identified significant weaknesses in the school in 2016. The local authority brokered the support of Wrockwardine Wood Infant and Nursery School and subsequently supported the federation process, which completed in April 2016. However, at the time of this inspection, the local authority was unaware of the school's overall effectiveness.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors have a strong understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are involved with reviewing the school's self-evaluation and check that the school improvement plan addresses any weaknesses identified. They hold leaders to account for the school's performance, including through the use of effective appraisal processes.
- Governors have a range of expertise which enables them to carry out their roles well. They are committed to improving the school and regularly visit to ensure that leaders'

actions are working. They understand their statutory responsibilities, including those relating to keeping children safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Children’s safety is of paramount importance to every member of staff. All staff are highly vigilant and have a thorough understanding of what to do if they have concerns about a child. Leaders act swiftly to follow up any concerns, and ensure that details are recorded accurately and held securely.
- Leaders undertake all relevant checks to make sure that staff pose no risk to children’s safety. Careful attention is paid to safer recruitment procedures when appointing new staff. This helps to ensure that children are kept safe in school.
- Leaders make certain that all safeguarding policies and procedures, including training, are up to date and understood by all staff. Daily checks are made on the learning environments to ensure that there are no risks to children. Individual plans identify the additional support some children need. Staff work with a range of agencies to ensure that children are safe.
- Leaders go to great lengths to ensure that all early years welfare and safeguarding requirements are met and that children are kept safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good across the school. All staff have received good-quality training and support over the last year to help them improve their practice. Some improvement to the quality of teaching is evident but leaders continue to provide staff with training to further develop their skills. However, the improved practice is yet to have an impact on ensuring that all children make the progress of which they are capable.
- Some staff do not use questioning well enough to find out what children can do. Questions focus on what children are doing rather than on what they are learning. This limits the accuracy of assessments of what children can do and does not enable staff to develop learning as much as they should.
- Often, staff intervene in children’s play too quickly. This limits opportunities for children to explore, learn for themselves and show what they are capable of doing. Staff do not plan activities which build sufficiently on children’s skills and abilities. This limits progress, especially for the most able children.
- Not enough staff have a clear understanding of what children should be able to achieve at they move through the early years curriculum. Consequently, in some areas of learning, staff’s expectations of what children can achieve are not high enough. This is especially so in areas such as reading, writing and mathematics, and for the most able children.
- The quality of phonics teaching is inconsistent. Some groups of children are well supported and have sessions closely matched to their learning needs and, therefore,

make good progress. For other groups, staff do not plan sessions well enough to meet children's needs. As a result, children become disengaged from their learning and progress is limited.

- Assessment procedures are not used consistently to identify what children have learned and can do, and to ensure that activities are planned to develop their learning. Assessments of children's learning have historically been unreliable. Leaders provide support to help staff assess learning more accurately. Staff are beginning to plan activities which are more closely matched to children's prior learning, thus improving their progress. However, there remains work to be done in this area.
- Where teaching is stronger, staff engage children in activities that are challenging, motivating and which help them learn well. Staff identify quickly what children can do, and adjust activities to take their learning forward. Children show a high level of interest in these activities and maintain their concentration for sustained periods. They ask questions such as 'how?' and 'why?' and staff encourage them to try to find things out for themselves. In addition, skilful questioning helps children to make good progress in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote children's personal development and welfare is good and is a strength of the school.
- Strong and positive relationships exist between staff, parents and children. Parents value the advice and support they receive about areas such as developing their child's personal care or behaviour.
- Leaders take all opportunities to teach children how to keep themselves safe. Children are taught about road safety and learn to use kitchen utensils safely in the 'café' area. Children also have the opportunity to learn about 'stranger danger' and keeping themselves safe when near open water. Leaders use visitors such as the local dentist, doctor and pharmacist to help children understand the importance of keeping themselves healthy.
- Staff encourage children to become independent. For example, staff support children to dress themselves, such as putting on their own coats and aprons. At lunchtimes, staff model how to use knives and forks correctly and encourage children to cut their own food. Children show a high level of resilience and are very happy to 'have a go'.
- When children become upset, staff are highly skilled at showing care and empathy to calm them quickly. Key workers ensure that children feel safe and settled, and understand their personal and emotional needs extremely well. Consequently, children are exceptionally well cared for.
- Some children attend the breakfast and after-school clubs. These clubs provide continuity of care for the children in a safe and secure environment. Children are provided with a range of healthy snacks and foods. Staff engage children in purposeful play activities which they enjoy, such as making and decorating cakes.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is good.
- Staff go to great lengths to model positive behaviours to the children. There is a strong emphasis on helping children to understand a range of social rules. Children are consistently encouraged to say 'please' and 'thank you'. Staff take every opportunity to praise and reward good behaviours such as turn taking and sharing. Staff model how children should show respect for one another, and listen to others when they are talking. All staff have consistently high expectations of children's behaviour and manage it very well. This results in a positive learning environment with very few incidents of inappropriate behaviour.
- Leaders ensure that detailed behaviour records are kept and monitor patterns of behaviour closely. Where concerns arise, leaders work with parents to identify any support needed to improve the behaviour. Leaders work with outside agencies to receive advice and guidance to meet the specific needs of individual children.
- Leaders check daily attendance registers carefully to ensure that children are attending nursery. In the event of a child not attending with no notification from parents, leaders make certain that the absence is followed up to check that the child is safe. Leaders note patterns of attendance and work closely with parents when their child does not attend nursery regularly. However, leaders do not yet track the attendance of different groups of children in sufficient detail.

Outcomes for children

Requires improvement

- Until April 2016, staff did not use assessment systems accurately to record children's learning. Children's learning journals confirm that assessments prior to 2016 were unreliable. Historically there has also been weak teaching across the school. As a result, some children have not made the progress of which they are capable.
- Since the federation in 2016, leaders check and moderate all assessments with great care. Staff receive training and support to help them make assessments that reflect what children can do. However, this is an area which is developing because some staff still lack a detailed understanding about how to assess children's learning accurately.
- Leaders' analysis of assessment information shows that children are beginning to make the progress they should. This is as a result of improved teaching and learning. However, not all children, especially the most able, are sufficiently challenged to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- The school's own assessment information shows that children's progress in developing their writing skills is below that of other areas of learning. This is because staff's expectations of what children can achieve are too low.
- The vast majority of disadvantaged children make the progress they should, with some making better progress. This is because leaders identify their needs quickly and ensure that the right support is put in place to help them. As a result, disadvantaged children make progress in line with their peers.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well to help them make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders seek advice from

specialists to help them identify and support the specific needs of these children. Individual support plans track the progress of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities carefully to make sure that the extra support is helping them. Consequently, these children make good progress.

- Leaders now track the progress of groups of children in detail. They use the assessment information to identify quickly where any individuals or groups are not making the progress they should, and provide timely support. However, progress information about the most able group of children is not checked as carefully, so leaders have less information about how well this group of children are achieving.

School details

Unique reference number	123348
Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	10012657

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 children	2 to 4
Gender of children	Mixed
Number of children on the school roll	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Smith
Executive Headteacher	Denise Garner
Telephone number	01952 387 910
Website	www.oakengatescc.co.uk
Email address	oakengates.admin@taw.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 May 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school federated with Wrockwardine Wood Infant and Nursery School in April 2016.
- Oakengates Childrens Centre is a smaller than an average-sized school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged children is below average.
- The proportion of children from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of children who have statements of special educational

needs or education, health and care plans is below average.

- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in the toddler and pre-school classes. The observation of phonics was carried out jointly with the early years leader.
- The inspector observed children at break and lunchtimes.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the leader of provision for special educational needs and the early years leader. She met with members of the governing body and spoke to a representative of the local authority. She also met with the school's external adviser.
- A range of children's learning journals were reviewed.
- A number of documents were considered including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. The inspector also considered information about children's progress, behaviour, attendance and safety.
- The inspector took account of 23 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. She spoke to parents before school. There were no responses to the online children's questionnaire.
- The inspector reviewed 24 responses to an inspection questionnaire returned by staff.

Inspection team

Ann Pritchard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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