

Borough Road Nursery School

Borough Road, Darlington, County Durham DL1 1SG

Inspection dates

14–15 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The nursery has not sustained the good standards seen at the previous inspection. The recommendations set then have not been implemented swiftly enough to secure continuous improvement.
- Governors have relied too heavily on what the headteacher has been telling them and not challenged or interrogated this rigorously.
- Governors have not had an accurate picture of the quality of teaching, children's achievement or the impact of any additional funding the nursery receives.
- Leaders have not ensured that, when they have observed teaching, any recommendations they have made have been put into practice. As a result, the quality of teaching has remained variable across the nursery.
- Observations, assessments and interventions are not used well enough to accurately identify the next steps in children's learning. Staff are not consistent in questioning children in such a way as to develop their thinking skills. Therefore, many children do not progress as rapidly as they could, particularly those eligible for pupil premium and the most vulnerable.
- Some staff lack a clear understanding of what children should be able to achieve at any specific age, particularly in phonics or writing. Therefore, they do not support and challenge children well enough to reach their full potential.
- Communication with parents about their child, or changes in the nursery, is not consistent.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly appointed acting headteacher correctly prioritised issues and areas for improvement and has rapidly addressed these.
- The newly federated governing body have already established an improvement board to robustly monitor the nursery's progress.
- The effective support from an external consultant, the local authority and the outstanding federated nursery school is helping the nursery to improve quickly.
- Children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress because staff are well trained to meet their individual needs.
- The provision for two-year-old children is well-led and these children are now making good progress.
- Children's behaviour and welfare are good throughout the nursery. This is because staff care for the children, and make strong relationships with them and their families.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - making sure that leaders and staff at all levels, particularly those new to their roles, receive support and training to develop and extend their knowledge in relation to their role, and so support staff stability and morale
 - using assessment information more precisely so that they can improve children's outcomes and secure more rapid progress, particularly for the most able, the most vulnerable and those children eligible for pupil premium funding
 - being certain that leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning improves quality and clearly holds staff to account for children's progress, and improves the standards being achieved by children from their various starting points
 - ensuring that the newly federated governing body uses a broader range of evidence than previously to gain an accurate view of the nursery, so it is in a stronger position to hold leaders to account
 - ensuring that the improvement board of the governing body make certain any recommendations are swiftly and effectively put into practice
 - taking actions to improve attendance, and the response to any unknown absence, particularly of the most vulnerable children
 - ensuring that records and paperwork for the most vulnerable children are better organised to support swift retrieval of information
 - improving communication with parents about their children's progress and any changes in the nursery.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including in phonics and writing, by ensuring that staff:
 - develop their subject knowledge and understanding of the expectations of what children should be able to achieve at each stage of their development, particularly in the delivery of early phonics teaching
 - use effective questioning to develop children's thinking and learning
 - have a clear understanding of why and when to intervene in a child's learning and when to stand back and observe
 - 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 vulnerable and disadvantaged children, as well as for the most able.
 - consistently provide opportunities for writing across all activities both indoors and outside.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Following a period of staff turbulence, the recently appointed acting headteacher is bringing some stability. She is ambitious for the nursery. In the six weeks since her appointment she has swiftly and accurately identified the areas for improvement, and has quickly begun to address these. She has high aspirations for the staff and the children. Her ability to prioritise actions means she is addressing issues in the right order, and already securing improvements.
- The substantive headteacher has been on long-term sickness absence since the beginning of term. Since then, effective support from the local authority, external consultant and the executive headteacher of the newly formed federation with an outstanding nursery has had a positive impact on the nursery. For example, there is now a clearer focus on core provision in the indoor and outdoor areas. Parents have noticed this and say their children are accessing more activities. The local authority has also brokered the federation between the two nursery schools, to secure sustainability and improvement. This formally came into being just prior to this inspection in November 2017.
- A broad range of activities is provided to enable access to a balanced curriculum. This is having a positive impact on children's personal and social development, their behaviour, and their attitudes to learning.
- Leaders, and particularly governors, did not have an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and therefore the self-evaluation gave an overly positive judgement on the school. This meant the plans were not focused on the right areas to secure improvements.
- Leaders were not using assessment well enough to accurately judge children's progress and attainment. The recently introduced robust moderation between the federated nursery schools and others has meant there is now a much more robust process in place for when the children leave the nursery.
- Leaders have not been using additional funding through the pupil premium well enough to secure rapid progress for disadvantaged children. Inspection evidence shows that while this group make some progress this is not rapid enough. The new governing body and acting headteacher have already recognised this. They have undertaken a review of the proposed spend of the pupil premium to better match the needs of the individual children for this year.
- Records of observations by the headteacher do not show any evidence of how teaching is improving. Although recommendations are made they are not then followed up in subsequent observations. Staff have had limited access to formal continuing professional development to improve their skills.
- Due to the rate of change in teachers since the last inspection, teaching assistants and support staff have had little consistency in leadership and approach, and have become quite demoralised.
- While staff communicate well with parents in day-to-day exchanges of information about their child, parents say they would like to know more about how their child is

progressing and how they can best support them at home. Parents also feel they should be informed of any staff changes, and consulted when there are changes that affect them, such as the start and finish times of the nursery sessions.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not been carrying out their strategic role as effectively as they should. They have accepted the headteacher's information about the school too readily. Inspection evidence shows that they did not question the headteacher closely about children's outcomes, often accepting explanations without further probing.
- However, the newly established governing body of the federation consists of highly experienced and skilled governors. Upon forming the shadow body, they prioritised an audit of their skills and co-opted members to fill any gaps in their knowledge and experience.
- They have swiftly and accurately identified the areas for concern within the school and have quickly acted to start to address these. They have established an improvement board for the nursery with a strong focus on progress. One member has a clear remit to closely monitor and scrutinise the progress of those children eligible for pupil premium funding.
- There are knowledgeable governors who are responsible for safeguarding at each site. The federation has developed high-quality support toolkits for each governor remit, including monitoring, scrutiny and reporting arrangements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The first action the acting headteacher took was to commission a safeguarding and health and safety audit from the local authority. She has acted upon the recommendations and has now ensured that adults cannot enter the children's rooms unsupervised. Parents say how they welcome this, and had themselves identified the potential risk.
- Staff have all received updated training and know exactly what to do should they have concerns about a child or a colleague.
- The acting headteacher is the safeguarding lead for the nursery. She has identified that paperwork relating to the most vulnerable children in the school needs better organising to aid information retrieval and ensure that nothing is missed.
- The nursery is always represented at meetings about the most vulnerable children. The acting headteacher has made sure that the member of staff who knows the child best attends these meetings. Staff say they value this as professionals, and it enables them to have a more in-depth view of the children in their care.
- The acting headteacher has introduced an incident and bullying record system to ensure that any issues are identified and that actions are effectively recorded.
- All relevant checks are completed before any adult can work in the nursery, and new paperwork has been added to staff files to ensure that all information required is

complete and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There is an inconsistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment between the two-year-old and three-year-old rooms, and within the three-year-old room. This variance contributes to why teaching learning and assessment are not good.
- Staff provide activities that cover most aspects of the areas of learning. However, there is a lack of provision for writing across all areas both indoors and outside. When children do show an interest, such as in role play copying the inspector by using a clipboard, paper and pencil were not provided, or freely available, and the opportunity was lost.
- Staff carry out some observations and assessments. However, particularly for the older children, this information and evidence is not used well enough to identify and plan for the next stages in their learning, and so does not effectively support children's progress. Staff do not confidently know when to stand back, observe and use the observation to plan for further learning, and when to intervene to progress learning instantly.
- Children in the two-year-old provision are progressing very well in their personal and social skills. They are already beginning to play together and share resources. For instance, when a group are working with construction resources, they begin to have conversations with each other about what they are doing, and ask each other to pass them the bricks they need for their model.
- Staff are skilled at modelling language in this room. Children respond well to this. They were observed sitting, speaking and listening to each other in discussions during the inspection.
- Staff are good at taking every opportunity to develop the two-year-old children's understanding of concepts such as number in practical ways, such as when floating model ducks in the water. Staff count the ducks in and count them out, with the children beginning to repeat and recognise the number value.
- Staff do not consistently use questioning to develop children's thinking skills and their understanding. When questions are asked it is more related to what children are doing. This means staff do not always know what children already understand, and are not able to effectively support children's progress.
- Staff are skilled at supporting child-initiated play in the three- and four-year-old provision. In the extensive outdoor area, children were observed building a tower from crates. Staff took the opportunity to use the mathematical language of taller and shorter, and number. However, they did not develop this play further into practical problem-solving.
- The quality of the teaching of phonics and early reading is inconsistent. Planned activities do not always meet children's needs. This is because not all staff are knowledgeable about how young children learn.
- However, children are developing a love of reading. They like to go into the book corner and choose books to read. Staff are good at supporting this activity and

encourage children to predict what will happen next in the story using picture cues. Children and staff were observed effectively using information texts when planning what to build in the construction area, and when identifying dinosaurs, during child-led learning and play.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good and is a strength of the school.
- Children effectively explore their feelings at group time, identifying whether and why they are happy or sad. Staff skilfully encourage the children to show empathy towards each other during these sessions.
- The two-year-old children were observed helping each other to keep their balance when walking across tyres outdoors, showing a developing awareness of the safety of themselves and others.
- When children become upset, staff are highly skilled at calming them down quickly.
- There is no evidence of any form of bullying, and none was observed during the inspection. Parents spoke of how safe their children were, and how they want to come to nursery.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a calm atmosphere in the nursery and children move from adult-led activities to child-initiated play and learning without disturbing each other.
- Children know the routines to follow and are secure in these. Staff have high aspirations for behaviour and are quick to praise good behaviour, such as sitting and listening.
- Children are consistently engaged in play and learning. They concentrate for extended periods of time on activities, such as sorting rice and glitter, or exploring the roundness of logs. They sit well and concentrate during adult-led sessions, especially when these are well planned to meet their needs and abilities.
- Attendance is not as high as it could be. The acting headteacher recognises this and knows it must improve. However, initiatives to reduce absence are not yet developed. In the event of a child not attending with no notification from parents, the nursery makes certain that the absence is followed up to check that the child is safe.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Children have not always been accurately assessed in their attainment, therefore not giving a true reflection of the position of the nursery in terms of children's progress from differing starting points. However, the recent implementation of robust moderation procedures has ensured that assessments are now more precise.
- Children enter the nursery with levels of development typically below what is expected for their age. Data held by the school shows this to be the case year on year, with the substantial proportion who are below staying the same.
- The nursery's own analysis of data shows that the rate of progress for all children has reduced year on year. However, leaders' analysis of the most recent assessment information show that children are beginning to make the progress they should.
- Boys and girls make very similar rates of progress, and in literacy and mathematics boys are making slightly better progress overall. However, some groups, notably those who are disadvantaged, and the most vulnerable, do not make the same rate of progress as other children in the school because leaders and staff have not been ensuring that interventions for these children are effective.
- Children who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress because staff are well-trained to meet their individual needs, and so these children get appropriate support. Individual support plans are regularly monitored to make sure any extra support is helping them.
- Children leave the nursery with outcomes generally typical for children of the same age, so they are being adequately prepared for the Reception Year. However, there are children who are capable of better, notably disadvantaged children, the most vulnerable and the most able, and they are not being as well prepared as they could be.

School details

Unique reference number	113982
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10019290

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	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Harker
Acting Headteacher	Cheryl Theakston
Telephone number	01325 380 785
Website	www.boroughroad.darlington.sch.uk
Email address	admin@boroughroad.darlington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school federated with George Dent Nursery School on 7 November 2017.
- Since the beginning of term, the substantive headteacher has been on long-term sickness absence and the newly appointed deputy headteacher has taken on the role of acting headteacher.
- Support has been given to the nursery by the local authority, a commissioned external consultant and the executive headteacher of the federated nursery.
- Since the last inspection the school has seen a substantial turnover of qualified teachers.
- Borough Road Nursery is smaller than an average-sized school.

- The school now delivers provision for two-year-old education.
- The proportion of children who are eligible and claim for pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of children who have SEN and/or disabilities is average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in several sessions across all age groups jointly with the acting headteacher.
- The inspector held meetings with the acting headteacher of the school and the executive headteacher of the federation. He also met with the former chair of governors, the current chair of governors and three other members of the federated governing body.
- The inspector met with two representatives of the local authority and the external consultant who have been supporting the nursery.
- The inspector met with five parents, and took account of the three responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. He also reviewed the nine responses to the staff survey.
- Several documents were considered including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. The inspector also analysed information about children's progress, behaviour, attendance and safety. A sample of children's learning journals were reviewed.

Inspection team

Geoff Dorrity, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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