

Chestnut Nursery

Magnolia Avenue, Exeter, Devon EX2 6DJ

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The nursery is at the heart of the community and serves its children and families well. Parents are particularly fulsome in their praise of the provision.
- Early years practitioners are exemplary in the care they provide for the children. This is because they go 'above and beyond their role' to ensure that children are safe. This includes 'taking parents under their wing' when required.
- Children make good progress across all areas of learning. This is because they are taught well by early years practitioners who know and understand how young children learn.
- The curriculum is particularly well planned to help the children develop their communication and language skills and support their social and personal development.
- Phonic skills are taught effectively and this prepares the older children for starting school. Books to read are plentiful but more could be done to promote reading in the outdoor area.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the nursery and know what needs to be done to move forward.
- Early practitioners make effective use of observations to evaluate how well children are developing and identify what they need to do to progress in their learning.
- Assessments have highlighted the need to challenge further those children who are most able, including those who speak English as an additional language.
- Many of the staff have new roles and are eager for opportunities to develop them so that they can carry out their responsibilities effectively.
- Additional funds are used well to provide specialist support for those children who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This enables the children to accelerate in their learning and make good progress.
- Children's behaviour is good. They work and play happily together and develop confidence as they learn. Relationships between practitioners and children are warm and nurturing.
- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the nursery and have high expectations for its future. Most governors are new and, although very clear about the strengths of the nursery, they are less secure about the areas that need further development.
- The many visits which are arranged out of the nursery enrich children's learning and promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of children making rapid progress by:
 - ensuring that staff provide challenging learning tasks for the most able children
 - carefully monitoring the support provided for children who speak English as an additional language
 - promoting children's reading skills in the outdoor learning environment.
- Further improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - making sure that staff with a new role have the opportunity to embed and extend their responsibilities
 - developing governors' skills in challenging the leaders and holding them to account for the effectiveness of the nursery.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since federating with the two primary schools, the executive headteacher and the head of school have successfully managed significant staff changes in the nursery. They have also skilfully reorganised provision for two-year-olds and improved the learning environment. Staff widely praised the changes that leaders have made for the benefit of the children.
- Leaders have had a positive impact on teaching and learning in the school. The introduction of an accurate system for assessing children's individual progress, which tracks them from entry into the nursery through to when they leave to go to primary school, has enabled them to identify where extra support is needed.
- Leaders have high expectations of all staff. Support and training are carefully matched to staff needs and linked closely to the appraisal system. Staff value the opportunities they are given for professional development. They report that it helps them reflect and improve their practice. All staff have a shared commitment to improve outcomes for all children.
- All leaders contribute to school improvement planning. They accurately identify the nursery's strengths and develop clear action plans to improve teaching and learning and children's outcomes. A significant proportion of staff members are new to their role and are still embedding the skills they need to be highly effective in their areas of responsibility.
- Leaders make effective use of the additional funding to support disadvantaged children. The high focus given to supporting the children's social and emotional needs helps them to separate confidently from their parents and start to manage their feelings.
- Additional funding for supporting children who have SEN and/or disabilities is also used effectively. Leaders quickly identify children they are concerned about and work closely with specialist agencies to identify the support they need. This enables those children who have SEN and/or disabilities to make good progress.
- Effective transition arrangements ensure that children are well prepared to start school. Additional arrangements for those who are vulnerable ensure that they are looked after well when they transfer into one of the local primary schools.
- Partnerships with parents are a high priority. They are encouraged to contribute to their child's learning and value highly all the opportunities they get to share in nursery life. Daily coffee mornings, joining their children on outings and sharing Christmas lunch are just a few of the many opportunities in which they are involved. The views of all parents can be summed up by one, who explained that 'Chestnut is a fantastic nursery.'
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of learning are strongly promoted through the varied curriculum. Very effective use is made of the local and wider environment to deepen children's knowledge and understanding. Regular visits to Halden Forest, the donkey sanctuary and train rides to the seaside at Dawlish enhance the learning experiences of the children and provide them with a sense of

wonder and delight.

- Children learn about British values and what it is like to be part of their local and national communities. This is achieved through the celebration of festivals from a range of cultures and the rich variety of resources within the learning environment. Children are taught to be respectful and tolerant of each other and are helped to resolve any differences between themselves.

Governance of the school

- Nearly all governors are newly appointed but bring with them a wide range of expertise. They eagerly undertake training to help them carry out their statutory responsibilities. Findings from an external review have helped them to sharpen their understanding of what the role of governor entails.
- Governors take external advice when setting the executive headteacher's performance management targets and these are regularly reviewed. They receive anonymised information regarding other members of staff and agree any pay rises with the executive headteacher.
- Governors are very clear about the strengths of the nursery. They recognise the crucial part it plays within the local community through the support it provides for families and the provision of such exciting learning experiences.
- Visits to the nursery and reports from leaders help them gain an understanding of the early years foundation stage. However, they are still at an early stage of challenging leaders and holding them to account for the effectiveness of the nursery.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders keep a careful overview of potential issues about children's protection and welfare. School safeguarding records are maintained to a high standard.
- The nursery works well with external agencies to meet the needs of all children, particularly the most vulnerable. Referrals to other professionals are prompt and appropriate.
- Staff have a good knowledge of local and national safeguarding issues. They are extremely vigilant about checking for signs of potential extremism, radicalisation, sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Leaders take swift and effective action when safeguarding issues arise.
- Leaders make sure that the specific needs of two-year-old children are given a high priority and that all staff know how to care for their youngest children.
- There are comprehensive procedures in place for the recruitment and selection of staff. The single central record of checks for all adults employed by the school is compliant.
- The school site is secure and visitors' credentials are checked closely.
- The school works well with parents and other stakeholders to ensure that children are safe. All records relating to safeguarding are fit for purpose.

- At the time of the inspection there were no breaches of the statutory welfare requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of how young children learn. They understand the importance of establishing warm and trusting relationships with both the children and their parents. This promotes the children's personal, social and emotional development effectively.
- Early years practitioners plan interesting and stimulating activities which are skilfully tailored to meet and support the needs of individual children. They play and work alongside children, encouraging them to be independent, but intervening when appropriate.
- Staff have high expectations of what the children need to learn. They model the correct language and sentence structure when asking children questions or providing oral feedback. They also sensitively give children time to think and work out the words they need to use before they are expected to respond to a question.
- Early years practitioners successfully promote a love of stories and reading in children. They read with them and share good-quality children's literature during group times. Staff introduce pre-phonics skills to the youngest children and give the three- to four-year-olds a secure knowledge of letter sounds prior to starting school. However, adults do not provide enough opportunities in the outdoor area for children to develop and use their reading skills.
- There is a strong emphasis on using actions and signs to develop and support the children's communication skills. Two-year-olds successfully joined in with the actions to 'Twinkle, twinkle little star' during a nativity performance for parents. Those children who have SEN and/or disabilities responded eagerly when singing and acting out songs such as 'Five little monkeys' and 'The wheels on the bus'. These activities promote their language development well.
- Early years practitioners develop children's understanding of early mathematical concepts effectively. Skills are woven into the activities in and around the nursery. Staff encourage the children to use their counting skills when they work out how many are in their group. They enjoy making shapes from pastry cutters and develop an understanding of words such as 'big', 'little', 'heavy' and 'light' when they play outdoors in the mud kitchen.
- Older children persevere with activities because they are engaging. The headteacher from one of the primary schools to which the children transfer told the inspector that those children who come from Chestnut are 'resilient learners'.
- Early years practitioners very carefully track the progress that each child makes. Experiences and assessments are captured effectively through an electronic system which parents can also access and add to.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote children's personal development and welfare is good. Staff nurture and take great care of the children.
- Once children settle into the nursery they start to gain confidence and enjoy exploring, discovering and finding out.
- They are happy and form particularly strong bonds with their key person. Children know they are safe and confidently ask staff for help if they need it.
- Two-year-olds thrive at the nursery because their specific needs are met well. Cosy spaces help them to feel safe and secure and enable them to rest. Routines for their personal hygiene needs are clearly understood and followed through by all staff.
- Most children know how to keep themselves safe and are respectful of each other. They generally handle equipment safely and wait patiently for their turn.
- Most children take advantage of their nursery place and attend regularly. Parents of those who do not turn up for their session are quickly contacted to make sure that the children are safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is good.
- Staff set a good example for children and, consequently, they are clear about how they should behave. For example, the two-year-olds quickly learn to play with the older children and share well.
- Children listen carefully to adults and respond to their instructions. Children know their routines well and enthusiastically settle to the activities on offer.
- Early years practitioners know that some children need help to resolve disputes. This is because they have yet to develop an ability to manage their feelings. However, staff use praise effectively to manage and reassure individuals who may feel frustrated.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Children join the nursery with starting points that are below, and often well below, those found typically for children of their age. A significant proportion of children start nursery still reliant on a feeding bottle and lacking the skills to toilet themselves. Others exhibit anxiety when separating from their parents. Skilled, sensitive help for parents from staff ensures that children quickly develop the personal, social and emotional skills they need to have for learning.
- Many of the children start nursery with language and communication skills that are at an early stage of development. They make good progress in developing their language skills. This is because the early years practitioners provide them with a wide range of opportunities to expand their vocabulary and support them to develop their speech.
- A significant minority of children start nursery with poorly developed physical skills. Staff give a high level of attention to developing these skills, particularly using the outdoor area and trips out of school to promote them. Cutting, building and using

dough also helps them to strengthen their hands and support their writing skills.

- Those children who are in receipt of the early years pupil premium make good, and often better, progress than their peers, in all areas of learning. The funds are used effectively to enrich the children's experiences and support their language development.
- Children who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified swiftly and the extra funding and support they receive is carefully crafted to meet their specific needs.
- Information on the children's progress is collected and analysed regularly. Any underachievement is quickly identified and swiftly addressed. For example, the assessments have highlighted that the growing proportion of children who speak English as an additional language have not been progressing at the same rate as their peers. Leaders are addressing this through the employment of a specialist practitioner who provides specific support for these children. Most recent information shows that these children are starting to accelerate the progress that they make.
- Although the most able children make steady progress, leaders have recognised that not all of them are sufficiently challenged to exceed age-related expectations by the end of their time in the nursery.
- Two-year-olds have a good start to their learning and make strong progress. This is a result of well-planned and sensitive support which enables them to develop their skills and grow in confidence.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 113050 |
| Local authority | Devon |
| Inspection number | 10019442 |

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.

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| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 4 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 77 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Peter Vickery |
| Executive Headteacher | Martyn Boxall |
| Telephone number | 01392 690418 |
| Website | www.chestnutnursery.co.uk |
| Email address | admin@chestnutnursery.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 18–19 September 2013 |

Information about this school

- This nursery is smaller than the average-sized school. It became part of the Exeter Children's Federation with Wynstream School and Montgomery Primary School in September 2015.
- The governing body has responsibility for all schools in the federation.
- The nursery shares the same site as a children's centre which is not managed by the federation.
- The nursery offers both full-time and part-time places for three- to four-year-olds and also provision for two-year-olds.
- The school has been through significant staffing and leadership changes since September 2013. The executive headteacher of the federation has overall responsibility for the nursery. The head of school for Wynstream School is also head of school for the nursery. There are two part-time lead teachers who share the day-to-

day management of the nursery.

- The nursery meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is average and continues to rise.
- The proportion of children who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- About one-fifth of children at the start of the nursery year are entitled to the early years pupil premium, but this proportion steadily rises during the academic year.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out over two days.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning with leaders at various times during the two days, including the children's nativity performance.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, lead teachers, nursery teachers and early years practitioners. The inspector also met with the chair of governors and the safeguarding governor. The inspector also spoke to two headteachers from local primary schools.
- The inspector evaluated a range of documentation provided by the school, including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- The inspector scrutinised the documentation relating to children's attendance, safeguarding and the tracking of the children's progress.
- The views of many parents were considered through informal discussions during the inspection and the three responses to the online inspection questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Lorna Brackstone, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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