

Inspection of an outstanding school: Ashworth Nursery School

Addison Close, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 1QU

Inspection dates:

17 December 2019

Outcome

Ashworth Nursery School continues to be an outstanding school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Ashworth Nursery welcomes all children, irrespective of their race, gender or culture. The school is a friendly and welcoming place to be. The school's motto, 'Happy children learn', is brought to life daily. Children arrive at the school happy, smiling and eager to learn.

Many of the children arrive at the school with a limited grasp of the English language. They receive strong support from staff who can speak a range of languages. This helps children to settle quickly and grow in confidence. Staff are strong role models. They are calm, supportive and caring. Children behave well. They are polite and well mannered. From the time they start school, children take turns, share resources and are kind to each other. We saw no evidence of bullying during the inspection.

Parents and carers are positive about the nursery. They say that their children are safe and well cared for. Parents typically commented that their children, 'achieve well and are ready to move on to their next school'.

Improving reading has high profile in the school's plans. Children enjoy listening to adults reading books to them at storytime. They also enjoy reading books on their own. However, there is a limited range of reading books and children have limited opportunities to read.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The acting headteacher has made significant and rapid improvements since her appointment. This has included strengthening the governing body. She has set high expectations for children, governors and staff. They all share her aspirations to provide the best education for all children. Staff told us that leaders support them and regularly check that they are happy at work. They say that leaders do their best to help make their workload manageable.

Governors are committed to the school. They bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to their role. They are keen to further improve their knowledge and skills so that they can help to improve the quality of education.

The curriculum has been well planned. It builds on what children already know. Staff understand that what children learn in early years will help them to be successful in the future. During the inspection, we saw children achieving well in most areas of the curriculum. For example, children were able to count up to 10 and say numbers that were more or less. Children are secure in knowing different colours. Some children explained to the inspector the effect that the yellow funnel was having on the blue water being poured through it.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) also achieve well. They thrive in this supportive environment. Their needs are assessed early on by knowledgeable staff. They learn alongside their friends and have access to the full curriculum. Parents of children with SEND are especially proud of the support that they receive. Children are keen to learn and listen well to staff. They rarely fall out because they are too busy enjoying their learning.

The new acting headteacher has made sure that the teaching of reading is given a high priority at the school. Leaders have carefully selected reading books that they want children to know. Staff enjoy sharing these books with children. They make this time a special moment that children look forward to. Children listen well and enjoy joining in.

Children also enjoy reading on their own. We saw children taking books from the book area to other parts of the classroom where they shared them with teddies, dolls and friends. Children handle books with care and turn the pages correctly. However, there are not enough opportunities for children to build on their level of interest across the learning environment. Children have limited access to books and other forms of reading, such as recipes and lists. The main reading books that are shared with children are also not readily available for children to enjoy, to help develop their reading skills.

Leaders have identified that for some parents, helping children to read at home is difficult due to language barriers. They provide weekly storytelling sessions for parents to watch. Through these sessions, parents gain confidence in reading stories with their own children.

The teaching of phonics starts when children arrive at the school. Staff keep a close eye on the progress that children make. Support is given to any child who needs extra help to catch up. Staff have a good understanding of how to develop a love of reading. However, some staff do not have a strong understanding of how to teach phonics and how this helps children learn to read.

Children learn about different faiths and cultures. They also raise money for different charities. They get to visit places of local interest, such as farms, and experience local walks. These activities help to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that keeping children safe is a priority in the school. All staff receive training and regular safeguarding updates. They know what signs to look for if they have concerns about a child. Staff know what to do if they are concerned about a child's welfare. The building is secure. Visitors are never left alone with children.

Leaders work well with other agencies to ensure that children are kept safe. They make sure that vulnerable children and families receive the support they need. Parents say that their children are safe and happy.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Access to books and early reading materials is not readily available for children across the learning environment. This hinders children's progress in learning to read. Leaders should ensure that resources to promote children's early reading skills are readily available. This will support children's progress in reading.
- Some staff do not have a good understanding of how to teach phonics. This affects their ability to teach children to read well. Leaders should arrange further training for staff. This will help to ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach early reading to a high standard.
- Governors show a passion and commitment to the school. However, some governors are new to post and are still developing in their roles. As a result, the level of challenge they currently offer does not hold school leaders fully to account. Governors need to improve their knowledge and skills. This will allow them to support and challenge leaders to further improve the quality of education in the school.

Background

When we have judged a maintained nursery school to be outstanding we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in November 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 119091 |
| Local authority | Blackburn with Darwen |
| Inspection number | 10058094 |
| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 4 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 67 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Dave Harling |
| Headteacher | Victoria Burnside |
| Website | www.ashworthnursery.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 25–26 November 2014 |

Information about this school

- The acting headteacher has been in post since September 2019.
- Children attend on a part-time basis.

Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with members of the senior leadership team, governors and staff.
- We spoke with parents when they collected their children from school.
- We looked at examples of children's work and spoke with children when visiting lessons.
- We listened to children read.
- We reviewed safeguarding documentation, considered how this relates to daily practice and spoke with staff.
- The inspection focused deeply on reading, mathematics and communication and language. This entailed discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, looking at examples of children's work, and discussions with teachers and with children.
- We took into consideration the four responses from parents and five from staff to

Ofsted's online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Julie Barlow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Keith Wright

Ofsted Inspector

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