

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Oxhey Early Years Centre

Eastbury Road, Oxhey, Watford, Hertfordshire WD19 4RL

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Inspection date:

9 November 2021

## **Outcome**

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Oxhey Early Years Centre is a warm and welcoming place. Staff know and care for all the children and families that come to the school. They are encouraging and supportive towards parents and carers. This is something that is greatly valued.

Children feel very safe at school. They get on well together. Staff make sure that children behave kindly towards each other so that nobody feels upset. They also make sure that children know what they can do and should not do. Children know the school's rules and routines very well. As a result, the school has a happy, calm and peaceful feel.

Children are given lots of interesting and exciting things to do. School is a fun place where children develop an early love for learning. Children enjoy learning new things with their teachers as well as finding things out for themselves. They love spending time outside in the school's large garden, which is full of fascinating things to play with and explore.

Leaders want children to learn as much as they can, so that they are ready when it is time to move on to primary school. They make sure that all children get the support they need to do so.

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

Oxhey Early Years Centre has gone through a lot of change over the last couple of years. There have been several leadership changes. The headteacher has only been in the role since the beginning of September. The consultant headteacher who works alongside her also joined the school in September 2021, along with a new senior teacher. It is clear that, after a difficult time, the school is now moving forward once again.

Other than safeguarding, leaders have made development of the curriculum their main focus since they took up their roles. They quickly identified the key things that needed to change and took prompt action to start to address them. Leaders have put a greater emphasis on encouraging children to become independent. This is working well. Children show great interest in their learning. They help themselves to the resources they need and continue with their activities for long periods of time.

Previously, the school's curriculum was based on a series of topics and activities that were revisited each year. The emphasis was on what staff wanted children to do rather than what they wanted them to learn. This has changed, although the changes are not yet fully developed. The curriculum is now based on the skills that staff want children to learn. Activities are then planned to help children to develop those skills. These changes are new and further development is needed.

Leaders refer to the environment as 'the third adult' in the delivery of the curriculum. The school had built up an enormous number of resources over many years. Leaders found that this made the school appear cluttered. It was also difficult to 'see the wood for the trees' when choosing the right resources to support the curriculum. Leaders carried out a thorough audit and stripped out old and superfluous resources. The environment has been significantly improved and is now a strength of the school.

The school has a strong focus on developing early reading. Leaders have identified key texts for use in each term. The books have been chosen carefully to provide a mix of books that children are more and less likely to be familiar with. They have also been selected for their features, such as the quality of illustrations and repeated phrases that children can join in with and remember.

Phonics is another area on which leaders have started to focus. Although some staff have strong knowledge and understanding of the earliest stages of phonics development, this is not the case for all staff. This means that, overall, staff do not have the expert knowledge they need to give children the best possible start in learning to read.

Leaders have a strong understanding of early literacy development. For example, they know the importance of ensuring that children develop a proper tripod grip as they start to learn to write. Children have daily 'busy fingers' sessions to help them to build up the muscles needed to do this effectively.

The atmosphere in the school is calm and constructive. Children focus well on their learning and they make progress. They are supported well by adults, who are skilled at helping them to move their understanding forward. For children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), staff adapt the curriculum well to meet their individual needs.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know the children and families that come to the nursery very well. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and understand their role in protecting children well. Staff are vigilant. They notice the small signs that could indicate that something is not quite right in a child's life. They report these concerns quickly, following the school's procedures. The school's designated safeguarding leads have strong knowledge and understanding of their roles. They take appropriate action in response to the concerns staff raise. The school's single central record of pre-appointment checks meets requirements.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders have started work on developing the curriculum and this is progressing well. However, changes are new and are not yet fully developed. Further work is needed to identify the small steps of learning that leaders consider to be most important for children in each aspect of the curriculum.
- Some staff do not have strong knowledge and understanding of systematic synthetic phonics and the earliest stages of how children learn to read. This limits the progress children make. Leaders and governors should provide suitable training and development so that all members of the teaching team become experts in the fundamental aspects of phonics and early reading development.

## **Background**

When we have judged a 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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in November 2012.

## **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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 the school and 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117077
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10211080
<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	72
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Matthew Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gemma Williamson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.oeyc.herts.sch.uk">www.oeyc.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 December 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The previous headteacher left the school in December 2020. The school's two senior teachers jointly acted as interim headteachers for the spring and summer terms 2021.
- The current headteacher joined the school, part time, in September 2021. She is also headteacher of Muriel Green Nursery School in St Albans. A memorandum of understanding is in place between the two schools to facilitate this arrangement.
- The headteacher is supported by a part-time consultant headteacher, to ensure leadership coverage across the week.
- The school's two senior teachers left the nursery at the end of the summer term 2021. A new senior teacher joined the school in September.

## Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and consultant headteacher, the senior teacher, staff and governors. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.
- Inspectors did deep dives in literacy, mathematics and physical development. We met with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at curriculum documents and spoke with children as they went about their learning activities.
- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors met with the school's designated safeguarding leads, checked the school's single central record, looked at safeguarding records, and spoke with children and staff.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and carers as they brought their children to school. They took account of 14 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and 13 free-text comments from parents.

### **Inspection team**

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Cox

Ofsted Inspector

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