

Inspection of Etherley Lane Nursery School

Hazel Grove, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 7RF

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders' expectations of what children should learn are not ambitious enough. Leaders have not developed a curriculum that clearly sets out what children will learn. Children experience a disconnected series of activities that do not enable them to make the progress of which they are capable. Staff do not have the curriculum knowledge to support children to achieve well. Children do not build the knowledge they need to ready them for their move to primary school.

Children are happy and safe. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Children settle quickly into the routines of the nursery. They form strong attachments to their key workers and are happy to leave their parents and carers at the start of the day. Parents welcome the positive, nurturing and caring role models provided by the key workers.

The nursery is a calm and purposeful learning environment. Children have the space to play and explore, including outdoors. Adults encourage children to build their independence. Children enjoy spending time in the forest school garden or playing in the mud kitchen. With support from adults, children learn to manage their behaviour well.

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

Leaders have not identified the key knowledge that children should learn during their time at the nursery. Key workers do not have access to plans about what knowledge to teach and in what order. Leaders have not provided staff with suitable curriculum training. As a result, staff do not have sufficient understanding of what children should know or how to quickly address gaps in their learning. Children's knowledge and understanding do not build well over time. Children are not well prepared for the demands of primary schooling.

Governors have not supported and challenged the school's leadership with sufficient rigour. They have been too accepting. The local authority and governors have not acted to resolve the issue of permanent school leadership over a four-year period. Governors have not ensured that leaders sought appropriate external support to develop a suitable curriculum. Governors have failed to hold leaders to account for identifying and tackling the nursery's weaknesses. Leaders, including governors, have not considered the staff's well-being and workload sufficiently. Some staff told inspectors that they feel they have been 'forgotten'. They feel they are working reactively rather than proactively. Governors have taken insufficient action to ensure leaders understand and address staff's concerns.

Children enjoy listening to a wide range of books which introduce them to rhyme, language patterns and story language. They choose to sit quietly with books in the outdoor classroom. Children know these books well and can recite the stories from memory. Adults read to children regularly. Some adults use questioning well to develop children's understanding. However, this is not consistently the case. Some

adults do not introduce children to new vocabulary consistently well. These issues limit the progress that children make.

The acting headteacher ensures that the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly. Staff use additional resources, such as speech and language activities, to meet children's specific needs. The acting headteacher works effectively with external professionals to provide children and families with specialist interventions. However, the absence of an ambitious curriculum limits children's learning opportunities. These children do not have the opportunity to gain the necessary foundations they need for later learning.

Adults have a strong understanding of how to promote children's positive behaviour and attitudes. They establish clear routines and expectations, such as putting on waders before playing in the water and taking turns on the bicycles. Adults provide positive role models for managing these routines and dealing with any frustrations. Most children demonstrate the ability to persevere with activities for extended periods of time. At times, when activities do not match their level of understanding, children lose attention more quickly.

Strong partnerships with parents are a key feature of the nursery. All parents who responded to the Ofsted Parent View survey said that they would recommend Etherley Lane Nursery. Parents enjoy the new online learning journals. Staff update these regularly with information that parents can share with their children at home. Leaders include assessment information in these journals. However, the lack of a well-planned curriculum limits the impact and effectiveness of these assessments.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The acting headteacher ensures that all adults working in the school are safe to do so. She has established a culture in which the safety of children is central to all decisions made. Governors monitor safeguarding records and procedures regularly. The acting headteacher provides annual training and regular updates to all staff and governors. Staff understand how to raise a concern. They are vigilant and quick to act when they are worried about a child.

The acting headteacher works closely with external professionals such as the health visitor and social workers. This ensures that children and families receive the additional support and advice they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not designed and implemented a suitable curriculum. This means that children experience disconnected activities that do not meet their learning needs. Leaders, including governors, should develop and implement a well-

planned and ambitious curriculum that prepares children well for their next stage in learning.

- Leaders have not provided staff with appropriate curriculum development training. Staff do not have the subject knowledge they need to identify gaps in children’s learning. Leaders should ensure that staff have a secure understanding of the small steps of development in each area of learning so that they can support children to catch up quickly.
- Governors have not given sufficient attention to the strategic direction of the school. They do not hold leaders to account effectively for the development of children’s education and the workload and well-being of staff. As a result, the school’s effectiveness has declined over time. Governors should urgently access the training necessary so that they can provide robust oversight and assurance and hold leaders to account for their actions.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers.

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

Unique reference number	113976
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10210885
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	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Barbara Lee
Headteacher	Jo Madgwick (Acting Headteacher)
Website	www.etherleylane-nur.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in an acting role since 2018.
- The number of children on roll has fallen since the previous inspection. As a result, governors have reduced the number of administration and teaching support staff.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

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

- Inspectors met with the acting headteacher, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these areas of learning: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, literacy, mathematics and understanding the world. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke to the acting headteacher, spent time observing daily routines and activities, spoke to staff and observed specific children at different times of the day.
- Inspectors also met with the acting headteacher to discuss the provision for pupils with SEND and procedures for monitoring children's attendance.
- To judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of recruitment checks, reviewed the procedures for safer recruitment of staff and held a meeting with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors met with staff to check their understanding of safeguarding and the impact of any training received.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start and end of the day and spoke to a selection of parents via telephone. Inspectors considered responses to the survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 22 free-text responses.

Inspection team

Alex Thorp, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Amy Keith

Ofsted Inspector

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