

Inspection of a good school: Aclet Close Nursery School

Aclet Close, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 6PX

Inspection dates:

20 July 2022

Outcome

Aclet Close Nursery School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children are happy at this friendly, welcoming school. They flourish here and enjoy growing and learning together. Leaders and staff ensure that every space is used effectively to excite and interest children. They plan activities which develop children's curiosity and support their wider development. An example of this can be seen when they take children swimming each week. Leaders use this activity to encourage children to talk about the world around them, and to develop their understanding of health and fitness.

Children behave well and enjoy playing together. Adults have high expectations and are excellent role models. They take every opportunity to model good manners and respectful behaviour. This results in children being considerate and kind to each other. Unkind behaviour is rare. Staff have created a calm, orderly and purposeful environment to help children to learn, both inside and outside the building.

Leaders value the strong relationships they have built with parents and carers. Staff work closely with families to ensure that they understand and know the children well. Many parents spoken to describe the nursery as being like a 'happy family.'

Leaders are committed to providing high-quality learning opportunities for children from the first days in the school. They encourage children to be independent and to 'have a go'. Staff are highly skilled. They never miss an opportunity to engage children in talk about their learning.

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

Leaders are clear about their ambitions for children's learning. They have created a curriculum which identifies clearly what they want children to know by the time they leave school. They are now refining this curriculum further to identify the specific steps in learning needed to help children reach these end points.

Leaders are knowledgeable about the statutory requirements for children in the early years. They support staff to plan learning opportunities for all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These activities interest children. For example, children were encouraged to talk about what they would mix in their potions before putting them in sparkling containers during water play. Others carefully balanced to walk the gangplank to cross the river of paper crocodiles, as they acted out events in a story.

Communication and language development is at the core of the school's curriculum. Staff use songs to help children to focus on their learning. Children join in with stories and recite rhymes daily. This results in children having confidence to adapt or alter them for effect. For example, one child was heard singing '1,2,3,4,5, once I caught a fish alive', then adapted it to be a shark. Leaders work well with external agencies to help children in the earliest stages of language development or with SEND. This ensures that learning is adapted to meet individual needs and supports children to make good progress.

Staff interactions with children are of the highest quality. Leaders have identified the key vocabulary they want children to use as they plan. They display it in all areas of the environment. Books are everywhere. Children are encouraged to share stories and talk about characters in role play activities. They enjoy working with adults to make story maps as they retell the stories to their friends.

Leaders consider how children's understanding of mathematical concepts is developed across the learning environment. They prioritise learning about number and pattern. However, children also have opportunities to learn about shape, compare sizes of objects and explore capacity and measurement.

Leaders and staff provide opportunities for children to develop physical control and core body strength from the first days of school. Much of this takes place in the well-planned outside provision. Children whizz up and over a small hill on balance bikes in the two-year-old provision. Others negotiate obstacle courses that they create in nursery. Children are encouraged to be brave and try new things. They do this enthusiastically, as they know that the staff are there to support and help them if things prove too tricky.

Staff have an accurate understanding of what children know and can do. They record learning based on observations of children in play. These observations are then used to plan other activities linked to children's interests.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They speak highly about how leaders support them with their well-being and workload. Governors work closely with leaders to improve the school. However, due to their reduced numbers, the level of challenge and support that they can offer is limited.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff create an environment where children feel safe. They are well trained to identify any children who may need extra support and to report concerns quickly. Leaders work effectively with outside agencies to protect and care for children.

Leaders build strong relationships with parents and carers. They know the children and families very well. Families are willing to share information with leaders and value the support that they give. One mum said, 'They have helped me with my life.'

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While leaders have ensured that staff understand the end points for all areas of the curriculum, in some areas they have not clearly identified how children's learning will build over time. Therefore, staff do not always identify the precise steps in learning needed for children to make the best progress. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum sets out progressively what they want children to be able to do, know and remember, and by when.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2017.

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

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| Unique reference number | 113972 |
| Local authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 10226999 |
| 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 | 76 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Celia Dixon |
| Headteacher | Lisa Jenkins |
| Website | www.acletclose.durham.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 8 and 9 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Aclet Close Nursery is a smaller than average-sized nursery school.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds.
- There is a breakfast club at the school.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.
- 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.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher to discuss the quality of education, provision for children with SEND, and safeguarding.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors focused on how the school met the requirements of the early years foundation stage curriculum. They focused on literacy (including early reading),

mathematics, physical development and how the school supported children's personal, social and emotional development. Inspectors also considered the school's work in other areas of learning.

- Inspectors met with other adults and visited a wide range of activities across the nursery.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those related to safeguarding, children's personal development, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online Ofsted Parent View survey, including the free-text comments, as well as responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

Inspection team

Andrea Batley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jo Warner

Ofsted Inspector

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