

Inspection of a good school: Usworth Colliery Nursery School

Manor Road, Sulgrave, Washington, Tyne and Wear NE37 3BL

Inspection date: 17 January 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children play well alongside each other. They enjoy the activities that staff provide for them. Children are kind, take turns and share the equipment and toys they play with. However, children do not readily talk to each other during shared activities. In the role-play kitchen, for example, they busily chop and cook and say very little to each other.

When adults provide a quality curriculum, children show interest and are enthusiastic. When using ice trays, pipettes and salt, there was lots of chatter, laughter and curiosity. However, the quality of the curriculum is not consistent across the setting. Leaders do not ensure that they organise the curriculum to help children build their knowledge as they move through the nursery.

Staff know the children well and provide care and support. Staff ensure children are safe and respond sensitively if someone is upset. Staff immediately celebrate success when children achieve something special.

Leaders have identified that the learning environment needs improving. They have quickly set about reorganising the nursery layout. Children can now independently access toys, games and resources throughout the day.

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

Newly appointed senior leaders have accurately identified strengths and areas for development. They are boosting staff morale and drawing on the knowledge and expertise that exists among staff. However, the school has suffered from some leadership turbulence in recent times, and this has affected the quality of education that children

receive. The curriculum includes appropriate areas of learning, but it is not adapted to successfully meet the needs of all children. The structure and organisation of what is taught to children between the ages of two and four is not well thought out. There is a lack of clarity for staff about what to teach and when. Consequently, they do not get the best out of the children.

Leaders know that many children start school with lower-than-expected levels of spoken language. However, leaders have not made communication and language a priority. Some staff do show children how to talk and articulate words clearly. However, other staff are unsure of how to support and provide effective interaction to help children improve their language. As a result, children struggle to talk to their friends and are not developing their speaking skills quickly enough.

Leaders have recently introduced a new assessment system so that staff can identify what children know and where they have knowledge gaps. This helps staff to see where the curriculum might need adapting or enhancing to meet children's needs. However, how staff gather information to check what children understand is inconsistent and does not support staff to plan what to teach next.

Staff ensure there is a calm, welcoming atmosphere. They are kind and supportive towards the children. Leaders identified that some children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), found the start of the day difficult. They have put in place sensible, well-thought-out strategies to support children with SEND, who now have a much calmer start to the day.

Leaders are keen for children to have a broad range of experiences. Children visit the local park regularly and listen to stories, nursery rhymes and songs daily. Role-play areas support children's understanding of healthy foods and healthy living. Children enjoy the outside area and are used to routines. They know where to put their coats and how to tidy up when it is time to come back inside.

Since the school started working in partnership with other schools in the federation, a number of new members have joined the governing body. They are keen to get to grips with all aspects of their role and understand there is a need for some additional training. Leaders, including governors, are aware that improvements are required. Strategic oversight of the school has not been rigorous enough. This has resulted in some weaker leadership around the curriculum, assessment and staff development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a secure understanding of what to do if they have a concern about a child. Annual training, backed up with regular safeguarding updates, ensures that staff know how and what to look out for if a child is at risk of harm. There are clear procedures for reporting and recording information. Staff are aware of the need to be vigilant for children

with SEND or those who are non-verbal. Leaders have effective relationships with external agencies. They consult and make appropriate referrals when required.

The curriculum helps children to manage risks at an age-appropriate level. This includes using equipment safely when playing outside and keeping safe in the sun. Safeguarding is effective, but some new leaders are not yet familiar with school systems and procedures.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not sufficiently well organised and broken down into manageable steps. As a result, children receive a disconnected curriculum that does not build upon their prior learning. Leaders should review the curriculum to ensure that each area of learning is carefully sequenced, with precise knowledge and skills.
- Leaders do not prioritise communication and language as a vital part of the curriculum. Children do not develop their speaking skills well enough. Some children struggle to communicate appropriately. Leaders need to improve the teaching of communication and language and ensure that staff are suitably equipped to teach this aspect of the curriculum.
- The information that staff collect from daily observations is not providing accurate assessment information. This means that children are not always taught the most appropriate next step to help strengthen their knowledge. Leaders should review formative assessment systems so they can help staff to understand how to collect information accurately and then how to use it effectively.
- Some new leaders, including governors, are not familiar enough with all safeguarding systems and procedures. This means that the safeguarding team may not be as effective as it should be. Leaders should ensure that new staff quickly understand the schools' safeguarding systems.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2013.

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.

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	108749
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10227021
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nora Waugh
Headteacher	Ailsa Higgins and Julie Heron
Website	www.usworthcollierynursery.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school joined the House Federation in January 2022.
- The two co-headteachers were appointed in November 2022.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held several meetings with the headteachers. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector met with the designated leader for safeguarding to discuss the school's procedures to safeguard children and scrutinised the school's single central

record. Inspectors spoke with staff about what it is like to work at the school and to discuss their understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures.

- Inspectors carried out learning walks and deep dives, with a focus on the prime and specific areas of learning. Inspectors met with teachers and support staff, visited classrooms, spoke with children and looked at examples of their achievements.
- Inspectors spoke with parents informally.
- Inspectors observed children at lunchtime and in the outdoor area.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school development plan, safeguarding information, and information relating to the school's use of the early years pupil premium funding.

Inspection team

David Milligan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Deborah Ashcroft

Ofsted Inspector

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