

Inspection of an outstanding school: Oaklands Nursery School

Oaklands Avenue, Porthill, Newcastle, Staffordshire ST5 0EX

Inspection date: 11 May 2023

Outcome

Oaklands Nursery School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children have great fun and learn many things during their time at Nursery. They are warmly welcomed at the door each morning with smiles; hugs and words of comfort are given if needed. Children settle quickly into the activities on offer. They invite visitors to join their play and soon share their ideas and thinking.

Children show increasing independence as they move through the two-year-old room into the three- and four-year-old room. They learn to work together, share and collaborate in a kind and mature way. Staff set high expectations for both learning and behaviour through their every word and action. Children respond exceptionally well to these expectations. The very youngest children peel their bananas and oranges for themselves. The older children help their friends to put their painting aprons on. They enjoy naming various birds they have been studying, such as robin, pigeon and sparrow.

Children have many opportunities to grow their knowledge, both within and beyond the setting. The local dingle is a favourite space, holding a special place in staff and children's hearts. Parents and carers speak of the Nursery holding a special place in their hearts too. They say that their child's time at Oaklands is 'a gift and a period we cherish just as staff cherish our children'.

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

Leaders are committed to giving children the very best start to their education. To this end, they have created a unique curriculum that weaves children's interests with defined learning effectively. Alongside this, they have connected with the Societas Trust as an associate partner. This partnership is making a positive difference to leaders, staff and children. Staff value the range of opportunities, training and support they receive. Staff make sure children benefit from the new knowledge they bring back into the setting.

Staff are exceptionally skilled at knowing each child's interests, needs and next steps. They use this knowledge extremely well to identify when a child requires some extra help.

They have many successful ways of supporting all children, but especially children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff work closely and well with a range of specialist services to give each child what they need at any moment in time.

Staff help children to know, follow and respect the boundaries in place. Many children are successful in following the rules and working together. For those who find this tricky, staff sensitively support the smaller steps they need to take.

Children are thoughtful thinkers. They have the words and confidence to share their own ideas, feelings and questions. Children show great focus and enjoyment in these sessions. They come up with many interesting and individual thoughts on a range of subjects. They transfer these to their learning across the days and weeks. Children know how to express and follow their own beliefs. They learn to understand and respect that not everyone will share the same opinion. For example, they vote for whether they prefer a sunny day or a rainy day. They know that some will choose sunny and some will choose rainy. They understand that it is fine to be different to, or think differently to, a friend.

Staff deepen children's learning and thinking through carefully chosen texts and rhymes. Staff use the thoughtful thinking sessions and story-creating sessions to bring stories alive for the older children. This excites and extends children's love of story and understanding of language. Children sequence stories well. They use all that they know to retell stories with love, laughter and liveliness. They enjoy making marks to capture their story through pictures. Children begin this journey of loving story, rhymes and language in the two-year-old room. Staff expertly sculpt learning into all aspects of the daily routine. There is rhyme at register time, snuggling up close for stories and pots of sound ringing out across the session.

Children's development across the areas of learning is spun within and across all experiences on offer. Each resource, activity and adult-child interaction is deliberate and happens for a purpose. This attention to detail ensures that all children, including those with SEND, achieve exceptionally well. It is a pleasure to see how well children enjoy sharing their knowledge and expertise with each other. Children willingly help each other to put aprons on independently. A child explains the structure and delicacy of a bird's nest. An expert climber repeatedly models how to climb the summit of the climbing wall to younger children. Inspectors agree with parents when they say that the nursery is 'a special place where staff impart knowledge gently and playfully and children thrive'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders hold the safety of children front and centre in all they do. They make the right pre-employment checks on staff. They train staff well to know how to notice and report concerns. Staff show a deep understanding of the many factors that are needed to keep these very young children safe. They establish strong connections with the children and their families through the keyworker system.

The warm, caring relationships and well-known daily rhythms and routines come together to help children feel secure and safe. Children know what to do and when. Staff teach children to use equipment safely, and they do. Whether it be hammering nails into wood, or cutting sticky tape, children follow the rules, stay safe and achieve success.

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 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 outstanding in March 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

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| Unique reference number | 123967 |
| Local authority | Staffordshire |
| Inspection number | 10227007 |
| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 5 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 60 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Paula Pattison |
| Headteacher | Nadine Key |
| Website | www.oaklands.staffs.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 28 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school works in an associate partnership with the Societas Trust. An executive headteacher from the trust supports the Nursery. A new head of school has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school caters for two-year-olds in its two-year-old room provision.
- The Nursery offers a mix of part-time places of 15 hours per week and 30 hours for working parents. These hours can be taken flexibly across the week.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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 this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school and a room leader.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in communication and language, physical

development and understanding the world. Inspectors visited adult-directed sessions and observed continuous provision, scrutinised curriculum documents and talked with staff about the way these areas are planned and taught.

- Inspectors met with leaders and staff to discuss their plans for children’s learning and development. They observed learning, both in classrooms and outdoors. They spoke with children and with staff and looked at examples of children’s learning.
- Inspectors observed behaviour of children throughout the day.
- The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The lead inspector reviewed responses to Ofsted’s online parent and staff surveys.
- The lead inspector met with senior leaders about the school’s safeguarding procedures. She reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors observed daily routines and spoke to staff about pupils’ safety.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school’s improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings, a range of policies and information on the school’s website.

Inspection team

Kirsty Foulkes, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Pamela Matty

Ofsted Inspector

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