

Inspection of an outstanding school: Beechdale Nursery School

Beechdale Road, Consett, County Durham DH8 6AY

Inspection date: 25 May 2023

Outcome

Beechdale Nursery School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Inspectors agree with staff when they say that Beechdale Nursery School is a truly magical place for children to learn and grow. Children's faces beam with delight when they explore the undersides of tree trunks for woodland bugs. Friends use correct vocabulary when chatting to one another about how they might use a whisk to mix soil and water in the forest school's mud kitchen.

Children are safe and happy as they enthusiastically explore the stimulating learning environment and the appealing activities on offer. Adults at Beechdale know children and their families well, always ensuring best interests and welfare are staff's priority. Children know implicitly that adults will care for and support them. Equally, all staff know that leaders have their employee's welfare and development at heart. The exceptional relationships that exist in this school create a warm and secure atmosphere where all excel.

Whatever their starting points, children are exceptionally well supported in their learning and play by staff who are experts in understanding the needs of young children. In turn, children are inquisitive and happy learners. The excellent start that children experience at Beechdale Nursery means that they are well prepared for the next steps in their education.

Behaviour is exemplary. Children concentrate deeply, engaging and persevering with activities well. They are delighted to learn new knowledge or to further develop their skills, clapping their hands in joy. Children form strong friendships. It is clear from their conversations and departures at the end of the day how greatly they care for one another. For example, when leaving school, many children use the phrase 'goodbye friends'.

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

This school is exceptionally well led at all levels. Leaders are hugely knowledgeable about early education. They provide training and guidance that ensure staff are experts too.

The curriculum is expertly designed by leaders who have a thorough knowledge of the early years curriculum and pedagogy. The curriculum is built on two well-considered priorities. Firstly, carefully constructed developmental milestones ensure that each child's individual needs are met. Secondly, an inspirational calendar of themes is the foundation for high-quality experiences. Through these, leaders ensure that children are exposed to a selected range of high-quality texts and stories. These books expose children to new and exciting language. The use of story time and rhyme activities throughout each day lays the firmest foundations for children's experience of, and joy in, early reading. They are taught to listen well and to truly engage in a variety of thought-provoking literature.

The approach to teaching communication and language is comprehensive. This includes adults precisely modelling spoken language, which inspires children to do the same. Staff introduce children to a range of visual resources and different forms of communication. This means all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can access the curriculum fully.

Staff develop an incisive knowledge of each child's needs. They use this knowledge to plan activities throughout the school's extensive grounds and facilities. Staff select experiences which help bring learning to life. These include visitors such as police officers and dentists who help the children to gain an understanding of the world around them. Leaders have ensured that children have regular opportunities to engage with the outdoor environment. All children enjoy and benefit from the on-site forest school provision. These, immersive and well-planned activities support the early years curriculum effectively.

Leaders and staff build strong relationships with families before a child joins the school. They quickly identify what children need to thrive at school. Children with SEND are very well supported. Children's needs are identified swiftly and with accuracy. Detailed plans are devised to support the learning and development of these children. They promote solid and manageable improvement. As a result, children with SEND make strong progress.

Children show independence from a young age because of clear expectations and well-embedded routines. For instance, they happily join friends in tidying up following a busy session of learning. Leaders actively encourage children to understand their own and others' emotions. As such, children identify their feelings well and, when required, use strategies to regulate these.

Governors' highest priority is to make strategic decisions in the best interests of children. Governors know the ambition of leaders and work hard to ensure that this ambition is realised. They are knowledgeable about the developments in school and of how the school impacts on families and the wider community. They hold leaders to account and check the impact of any changes made.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff at Beechdale Nursery School firmly believe that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Leaders ensure that staff and governors are exceptionally well trained and knowledgeable about keeping children safe. Staff report concerns promptly, and leaders and key staff respond diligently.

Leaders are passionate and dedicated advocates for vulnerable children and their families. Leaders ensure that relationships with families are strong, professional and supportive. Where safeguarding needs are identified, leaders act swiftly. They are quick to engage external agencies when needed. They are not afraid to challenge if they think more should be done.

The curriculum provides lots of opportunities for children to learn about safety. For example, children learn to take safe risks while exploring the school's forest area. They know about good relationships. These are expertly modelled by staff and the ever-popular 'Mr Croc'.

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 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 outstanding in February 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	113985
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10227082
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	69
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Neil Jukes
Headteacher	Julia Graham
Website	www.beechdale.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Beechdale Nursery School federated with Consett Infant School in January 2016. There is one executive headteacher for both schools and a joint governing board.
- The proportion of children with SEND is above average.
- The nursery school offers breakfast and lunchtime clubs, which extend its provision.
- The nursery school does not use alternative provision for its children.

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 carried out deep dives in the areas of communication and language development, personal, social and emotional development and understanding the world. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders and observed children's interaction and learning in nursery. They spoke with teachers and

with some children about their learning. Inspectors looked at samples of children's work, including digital evidence of previous learning.

- Inspectors observed children sharing books with familiar adults.
- Inspectors observed how children interact with peers and adults around the school, including during lunchtime.
- Inspectors reviewed school policies and procedures relating to safeguarding. They scrutinised documentation, including the single central record and training records. Inspectors discussed safeguarding with governors, leaders and staff.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders of the school.
- The lead inspector met with governors. He also held a telephone call with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Parent View, including the free-text responses. An inspector met with some parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. They spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Marcus Newby, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie McGrane

Ofsted Inspector

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