

Inspection of a good school: Oxhill Nursery School

Oxhill, Stanley, County Durham DH9 7LR

Inspection date:

10 May 2024

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. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children in this school benefit from a safe, nurturing environment in which to start their education. They enjoy positive relationships with adults. Children know and understand the school's routines and expectations. They behave well and play cooperatively with each other. The school focuses on children's personal, social and emotional development. Children learn to understand the language of feelings and to care for each other. For example, they listen to stories such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' and talk about the characters' feelings.

While the school has high expectations for children's achievement, these expectations are not fully realised across all areas of learning. Adults' interactions with children are not consistently high quality. Sometimes they miss opportunities to challenge children's thinking and extend their vocabulary. It is not clear what staff intend children will learn from some of the activities in the setting.

The school builds strong relationships with parents and carers. Parents can accompany their children on educational visits, such as the whole-school trip to the beach. The school uses an online system to inform parents about what their child is doing at school. Many parents appreciate the care and support that the school offers.

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

The school's curriculum sets out what children should know and remember at different points in the year. In some areas of learning, such as personal, social and emotional development, the school has thought carefully about the small steps of learning that children need to take to reach end goals. Staff understand how to support children's

learning. This contributes to children being prepared well for the next stage of their education. However, this is not consistently the case in all areas of learning. In mathematics, for example, it is not clear how children will build up to being able to solve mathematical problems involving numbers up to five. Staff are not clear about how to help children achieve this. This is reflected in a lack of carefully thought-out activities and interactions within the provision, particularly outdoors.

Where the curriculum is not planned well, staff are unsure about how to check what children know and remember. This means that they do not identify and address gaps in children's knowledge swiftly. The school has recently introduced a new system for assessment. However, this does not currently align with what is being taught.

The school considers how to develop a love of reading among children. Children hear lots of stories, songs and rhymes. Adults understand that children need to hear these repeatedly so that they become familiar with them and can orally retell them. The school has developed a book spine and a progression in nursery rhymes document. This ensures that children experience a wide range of texts and nursery rhymes by the time they leave the school. Staff teach children how to recognise the initial sounds in words and how to tune into environmental sounds. This helps to prepare them for formal phonics teaching when they start Reception. While children enjoy positive interactions with adults, these interactions are not sharply focused on promoting language and learning. The school is yet to map out the key vocabulary that children need to learn and be able to use. Staff provide limited opportunities for children to use new vocabulary in the setting.

There are a range of opportunities for children to interact with the local community and to have experiences beyond the school. For example, children visit local supermarkets to buy ingredients for baking. They work with a local charity and visit nearby elderly residents to sing carols at Christmas. The school is highly inclusive. Support plans for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities show that the school makes extensive use of external agencies for advice and support. This ensures that children get the help that they need to thrive.

Governors understand their statutory duties and fulfil these well. They are supportive of the headteacher. They take staff workload and well-being into account. Consequently, staff are positive about working at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While the school has identified curriculum end points, it has not identified the precise knowledge that children need to acquire in some areas of learning. This contributes to some activities within the provision lacking purpose. Staff are unclear as to how to extend and challenge children's learning and vocabulary. The school should ensure that

the small steps of learning that children need to know and remember are equally well planned across all areas of learning.

- The school does not make sufficient use of assessment to identify and fill gaps in children's knowledge. Staff are unclear about how well children are achieving. Once the curriculum has been refined, the school should work to improve its assessment systems to ensure that gaps in children's knowledge are quickly identified and addressed.

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 March 2015.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	113970
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10320352
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	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah Golightly
Headteacher	Julia Watson
Website	www.oxhill.durham.sch.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	28 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been significant changes in staffing since the school's last inspection. This includes changes to the leadership structure of the school.
- The school has provision for children from the age of two.
- The school does not use any alternative provisions.
- Childcare provision is available before and after school. This is run by school staff and managed by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, representatives from the governing body and the school leadership adviser from the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited the provision, spoke to teachers and spoke to some children about their learning.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders and staff; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered how the school caters for pupils' wider development.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour when accessing both indoor and outdoor provision.
- Inspectors considered the free-text comments made by parents in response to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as part of the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with some parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Philippa Kermotschuk, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tim Scargill-Knight

His Majesty's Inspector

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