

Inspection of Whitegate Nursery School

Victoria Road, Padiham, Burnley, Lancashire BB12 8TG

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 June 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Children arrive happily each morning at this caring nursery school. They have a strong sense of belonging and feel safe. Children benefit from warm and nurturing relationships with staff, who get to know them well as soon as they start at the school.

The school has high aspirations for what children can achieve. Typically, children learn well across the curriculum. They demonstrate their awe and wonder through exciting learning opportunities. For example, children learn how to mix their own paint to create paintings inspired by the books that they learn about. They delight in simple pleasures, especially outdoors, where they giggle with delight while splashing in puddles.

In the main, children show positive behaviour. They play well alongside others and learn about the importance of taking turns with toys. Children find out about some of the ways that they are unique. They are highly curious about visitors and confidently approach them to introduce themselves.

Children learn about the world around them through real-life experiences. For example, they learn about animals and life cycles during farm visits and by watching caterpillars and ducklings grow. Children visit places in the local area, such as shops. They have had video conferences with children from another school and are due to meet them in person.

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

The school has continued to review the design of its curriculum since the previous inspection. The curriculum is broad and ambitious. The school has determined the knowledge that children should learn. Children learn well. This prepares them successfully for their next steps, including their eventual move on to primary school.

Overall, the school provides staff with training and support that helps them to develop their knowledge of the curriculum and how to implement it effectively. Staff work closely to design learning activities and to discuss how well children are progressing through the curriculum. However, there is variability in how successfully staff deliver the intended learning. For example, from time to time, staff do not introduce new concepts well enough or adapt their approach to support children in knowing and remembering more.

The support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a strength of the school. Children's additional needs are identified quickly, and staff support them well to help them to settle and be ready to learn. This is particularly the case for children who attend the school's 'nurture' sessions and interventions.

Communication and language are prioritised by the school. Staff engage children typically well with nurturing and positive interactions. Books are prominent across the nursery and children listen to stories, songs and rhymes with interest. They recount stories and use their imaginations to think what might happen next. Children take books and 'story sacks' home to share stories and activities with their parents and carers.

The school supports children's attendance well. For the most part, the school has a calm and purposeful learning environment. This helps children to join in with activities and to develop their self-confidence. However, there are times when staff do not support children's behaviour and attitudes well enough. This means that some children's low-level behaviour is unaddressed and continues, which reduces the quality of their learning.

Children's personal development is well considered. Staff develop children's independence as soon as they start at school. Children are encouraged to serve their own lunch and drinks. They develop their self-care skills well, such as by putting on their own wellies and waterproofs in readiness for outdoor learning. Two-year-old children are gently supported to develop their skills, such as when climbing and balancing on low-level apparatus.

All involved in the school are proud to be part of it. The governing body supports and challenges the school well to aid continual improvement. Staff appreciate the teamwork approach that pervades the school. They are given the time needed to complete their roles and value the support for their work and well-being from their colleagues.

The school provides parents with comprehensive information about their children's learning and how they can further support this at home. Parents were highly positive about the school and told inspectors that staff go 'above and beyond' for their children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not made sure that all staff know how to best deliver the intended curriculum. This variability means that some staff do not support children's learning consistently well, which hinders how successfully children build their knowledge and skills. The school should ensure that staff implement the curriculum consistently well.
- At times, staff do not address children's low-level behaviour well enough. As a result, these behaviours continue and some children's engagement in learning deteriorates. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge and confidence to better support children's behaviour and attitudes, so that they learn as well as they can.

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	119096
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10348129
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of children	2 to 5
Gender of children	Mixed
Number of children on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alan Perry
Headteacher	Catherine Tasker
Website	www.whitegate.org
Date of previous inspection	5 December 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school shares its site with a separate provider, which is registered on the Early Years Register. This provider offers before- and after-school care for the children of this school. This separate provision was not inspected as part of this inspection.
- The school provides educational provision for two-year-old children.
- At the time of this inspection, there were no children aged five on roll.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: communication and language (taking account of early reading), mathematics and physical development. In each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders and visited classrooms and outside areas. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other areas of learning.
- The lead inspector observed staff sharing books with several groups of children.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders. The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors spoke with the school’s improvement partner and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with children and observed their behaviour throughout the day as they played in the nursery, including at lunchtime and in the outdoor areas.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and children. They considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children’s interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school’s self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and documents pertaining to children’s behaviour and levels of attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and their well-being. They considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey for staff.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The lead inspector met with some parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

David Lobodzinski, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Rachael Alarcon

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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