

Weoley Castle Nursery School

109 Weoley Castle Road, Weoley Castle, Birmingham, B29 5QD

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Children make an excellent start to their education and are very well prepared for the next phase in their life.
- The dynamic and inspirational leadership of the headteacher is driving the nursery forward outstandingly well.
- Leaders and managers at all levels have been extremely successful in moving forward what was already an outstanding nursery in many areas to providing an even higher quality of care and education for all.
- The whole staff team work very well together. They provide a passionate and shared determination to improve the life chances of local children and their families.
- Staff have an in-depth understanding of the ways that children of this age learn. They continually review and adapt the way they work and meet the children's diverse learning and behavioural needs in an exemplary manner.
- Children of all abilities and from all backgrounds make excellent progress. They become highly confident and enthusiastic young learners.
- Teaching is outstanding because staff share a passion and determination to provide the best experiences they can for the children.
- Staff ensure that activities provide the right level of difficulty for all the different ability groups. On-going checks mean that everyone is challenged to move on in their learning when ready. Very occasionally, chances are missed to promote communication skills.
- Children's behaviour is excellent. They settle in quickly and become absorbed in activities led by adults and those that they choose themselves. For their age they have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.
- The vibrant and exciting areas indoors and outside stimulate the children's interest and imagination. Excellent use is made of Acorn Wood to stimulate an interest in the environment.
- The partnerships with parents are excellent. They speak with huge pride about how warmly staff welcome them and ensure that adults and children alike are encouraged to develop their skills.
- Leaders, staff and governors work very closely together in their shared determination to make children's lives even better. Their work with other schools and agencies has ensured sustained and high quality teaching and learning for the whole school community.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in part of eight lessons and a wide range of other activities. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspector also scrutinised records of children's recent work including examples of their 'Learning Journey' booklets and data about the progress of different groups. She spoke to groups of children, including at lunchtime, and listened to several children re-telling their favourite stories.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher; the special educational needs coordinator, the Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator, class teachers, and key workers (support staff working with groups of children). The inspector also spoke to representatives of the governing body and the local authority as well as in addition both the Community Site Manager and the Integrated Services Manager regarding safeguarding.
- The inspector met several parents at the start of each day. She also took account of 13 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and nine replies to the staff questionnaire.
- Numerous school documents were reviewed. This included the school's self-evaluation summary and records of the monitoring of teaching and learning and summaries of work with other agencies. The inspector also scrutinised records relating to safeguarding and attendance.

Inspection team

Sue Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The nursery is smaller than many nationally.
- Children usually attend for half of the week (from Monday to Wednesday or Wednesday to Friday) following their third birthday. Several children attend full time due to increased levels of need.
- Almost half of the children are from lone parent households.
- More than 40% of children currently on roll are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average.
- Approximately 30% of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds with more than 10% speaking English as an additional language. This is close to the national average.
- More than 40% of children have additional needs, which is much higher than average. Many of these children are referred by health and social workers. An above average proportion has behaviour, social and emotional difficulties and are often part of the school's nurture programme.
- The nursery follows the principles of the 'High Scope' project. It is an Early Years Teaching Centre and a partner in the local authority's Early Years Improvement Group. The setting is involved in numerous local and national projects and holds many awards, including as an International School.
- The nursery manages and uses an outdoor area, Acorn Wood, at a nearby school.
- The nursery school works as part of a local Children's Centre but this is inspected separately. The nursery also provides day-care from birth to three years in its Little Builders 1 facility. It has very recently extended provision for the Little Builders 2 group in another local school for two to rising three year olds. These are on separate sites and did not form the main focus for this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff use all opportunities to extend children's speaking skills and develop their ability to communicate with others.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- When children enter the nursery their skills and knowledge are often well below the expectations for their age. This is particularly evident in their ability to communicate with others.
- Many children lack self-esteem and several have behaviour, social and emotional difficulties. Most have limited awareness of the world around them and their personal development is limited. Very few have a good understanding of numbers. Their creative skills are often well below the expectations for their age and they lack imagination. Their physical skills are often a little better.
- Some children have attended day-care provision linked to the nursery and have better independence, knowledge and skills than other groups. The very few more able children have higher-level development in all areas, particularly in their confidence in communicating with others.
- A wide range of evidence shows that children of all abilities and from all backgrounds, including those entitled to free school meals, make excellent progress in the prime areas of learning. School data indicate that from a low base children usually meet and often exceed the targets for their age.
- Observations during the inspection showed that children develop a great interest in learning and want to do well. For example, when visiting Acorn Wood they enjoy looking at a range of items and identifying what they are, what they look and feel like, and where they come from. They become animated in their discussion when preparing to investigate the outdoor area and excellent progress was made in communication and several other areas of learning.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs also make outstanding progress, as do those speaking English as an additional language. This is because their individual needs are recognised at an early stage and support is well tailored to their particular needs. Children in the nurture group were observed making excellent progress in their personal development. Here, staff used questions particularly well to encourage children to identify what was acceptable behaviour or not.
- A particular success is the extensive work that staff do to model early writing and encourage children's mark making. Numerous large-sized word and picture maps are produced where staff initially write what the children say and which the children then annotate with their own letters, words and pictures. Reading is promoted extremely well by all staff and as a result children love looking at books, listen to stories attentively and enjoy retelling them to an adult or to other children. Some clearly demonstrate their growing knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) by their ability to write a few simple words unaided.
- The records the nursery keeps of children's progress, in the form of Learning Journeys, are exemplary. Families say their much older children still regularly refer to these as a vivid record of their very enjoyable early learning. As part of a family learning project some parents and children also produce beautiful scrapbooks and photo books of their shared learning experiences.
- Children make excellent progress in their understanding of numbers and shape. Incidental experiences are used very well, for example to match number cards to cartons of milk. Careful checks of the number in the group are then used to involve all children in identifying if they

have enough cartons and how many want a drink of water.

- Children enhance their creative and physical skills very successfully, including through role-play and use of the very well maintained and stimulating outdoor areas.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching over time and as observed during the inspection is consistently outstanding. This is because all staff in a variety of roles have very high expectations of what the children can achieve. This enables those of all abilities to make rapid and sustained progress. Parents are rightly full of praise for the high quality of teaching and support for their children.
- Staff have an extensive knowledge of how young children learn and an excellent awareness of each child's individual needs. They use these well to provide interesting and challenging activities that provide the right level of difficulty for all ability groups. This ensures that disabled children, those who have special educational needs and the most able are all challenged at a level that is appropriate to their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The staff team are a strong and effective group of teachers and teaching assistants who are all highly valued and share the teaching role equally. This ensures consistency of approach and clear boundaries which are particularly beneficial for helping children with behavioural difficulties overcome their personal challenges.
- Staff develop daily routines with the children that help them settle well. An excellent example was seen in a 'greeting time' session where children chose a coloured shape which staff fastened to their name card. This was then used in a registration activity for the children to identify their name and the colour and the shape attached. Through excellent prompting by staff some higher attaining children then helped to spell December and complete the day's calendar.
- The nursery places a very strong focus on professional development with many staff in all roles continuing to increase their qualifications. The careful reflection of what works well and what could be improved is key to the school's sustained outstanding development. This is led by the leaders' strong focus on improvement and reflected in the lively and stimulating classroom and outdoor environments.
- Adults are particularly effective in encouraging less confident children to join in activities and develop their self-esteem. Praise is used widely to encourage the children to try harder and persevere with what they are doing.
- Staff usually use questioning well to stimulate children's ideas and promote their oral contributions. Very occasionally they miss opportunities to extend children's responses by asking additional questions.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

- The typical behaviour of the children is outstanding in a wide range of activities in and around the nursery. Children quickly acquire exceptionally positive attitudes to their learning. Parents speak with joy about how eager their children are to come to nursery. Observations show how children become very absorbed in activities. They respond quickly to invitations from adults to join in activities such as sharing a book and participate with enthusiasm.

- Children greatly benefit from the way adults engage them in stimulating activities and make very clear what is expected of them. This is particularly beneficial for children with behavioural difficulties who work as part of the nurture group. They quickly start to recognise some of the boundaries to their behaviour, excellently illustrated in a short discussion about the dangers of jumping around and knocking chairs over.
- For their age, most children have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. Children from all backgrounds play happily together. Most wait patiently for their turn and share resources readily. There is no evidence of bullying, name calling or racism. No child has been excluded for poor behaviour.
- The nursery puts a strong focus on developing good manners, seen in children's consistent use of 'please' and 'thank you' and the modelling of how to use cutlery properly at lunchtimes.
- The nursery works hard to develop the habits of regular attendance and make clear to parents the impact this has on their children. First-day calls are made to families should their children not attend. Attendance has recently risen and punctuality improved.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The pursuit of excellence is at the heart of the nursery's work. This is demonstrated by the manner in which the outstanding practice identified in the last inspection has not only been maintained but improved in many areas.
- Key to the excellent quality of provision is the exemplary work of the headteacher. Her commitment to the school and its growing sphere of influence in developing day-care and pre-school provision is a model of what can be achieved for children and their families in vulnerable circumstances.
- The headteacher is very well supported by other staff in leadership roles. The whole staff team are united in their enthusiasm to provide the best they can for the community, coupled with careful reflection of what works well and what can be improved further. Should any concerns arise, the issue is carefully analysed and action taken. For example, a minor question was raised during the inspection concerning the storage of equipment which was immediately addressed.
- All of the staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire strongly agree that all aspects of the school's work are effective. For example one noted: 'All staff and leadership do their very best for every single person who walks through our doors (adults and children). Leaders are inspirational and very supportive.'
- Parents are delighted with the provision for their children with many touching comments made about how staff have gone out of their way to support them in times of family trauma. All of those who responded to the parent questionnaire strongly agree that leadership and management is highly effective.
- Key to many of the successes is the nursery's very thorough self-evaluation procedures. Leaders carefully and rigorously monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Such information and data about children's progress is linked to further training and the rates of pay awarded. This ensures the school has strong capacity to continue to improve.
- The nursery has been particularly successful in developing links with an extensive range of external groups and agencies. Staff work closely with health and social care professionals, and

other schools, the children's centre and training organisations. This has had a major impact on ensuring that all aspects of the education and care provided for children and their families are highly effective.

- The programme of work and wide range of activities the children take part in are imaginative and stimulating. There are strong links with international groups with staff visiting schools in several other countries. They use such events expertly to stimulate children's wider learning and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for what it rightly identifies as an outstanding nursery.
- Leaders and governors make sure that there is no discrimination and that all children and their families are treated fairly. This ensures that everyone has equal opportunities to succeed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very knowledgeable about the school and finances are managed prudently. The Chair of Governors is very well supported by a strong and well-informed group of governors who all share a passion for what the school provides. They are a highly reflective group of people who share a determination that they continue to improve their own effectiveness too. They ensure that they are well enough informed to challenge school leaders where appropriate. Governors attend training with staff and visit to observe activities. They are well informed about the progress all groups of children make, and of the quality of teaching. They ensure that the school meets statutory requirements regarding the management of performance and its link to pay. They also make sure the school meets the requirements for safeguarding the children.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103133
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	427066

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bruce Harvey
Headteacher	Lesley Harris
Date of previous school inspection	16 February 2011
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