

Hetton Lyons Nursery School

Four Lane Ends, Hetton-le-Hole, Houghton le Spring, Tyne and Wear, DH5 0AH

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is good. Most children enter with skills below those typically expected for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning and, by the time they leave, most children have reached expected levels.
- Teaching is good because teachers understand how young children learn and plan exciting and interesting activities that motivate children to take part and enjoy playing and learning together.
- Most children are keen to learn and behave very sensibly in the calm and safe school environment. Relationships between staff, parents and children are particularly strong. As a result, children swiftly develop as confident, independent learners who respect one another and adults in the school.
- School leaders, including members of the governing body, have improved the curriculum to make it more closely aligned to children's interests and experiences and have also developed the skills of teachers in observing and assessing learning. This has resulted in improved progress in mathematics and writing.
- Strong links with parents and outside agencies support children and their families very well, particularly children whose circumstances might place them at risk, disabled children and those with special educational needs. As a result of this and the high quality of support in school, these children make outstanding progress from their individual starting points.
- After a period of change all the staff and governors are committed to school improvement, inspired by the strong leadership of the new headteacher.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers and assistants are not engaging children often enough in conversations that lead them to think more deeply, solve problems for themselves and make predictions, especially when children are following up their own ideas.
- School leaders' plans for improvement are not always sharply focused on measurable outcomes in terms of children's learning and development or specific areas for improvement in the quality of teaching. This reduces their effectiveness in driving improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven sessions or parts of sessions, one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to small group sessions.
- Discussions were held with parents, three members of the governing body, one local authority representative and school staff. There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for the lead inspector to be able to access them.
- A range of documents were looked at, including the school's data on children's progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Janette Corlett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a nursery school of average size. Most children are of White British heritage and very few children are at an early stage of acquiring English.
- An average proportion of children are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported at Early Years Action or Early Years Action Plus. No child has a statement of special educational needs.
- Children attend the school for up to five terms following their third birthday and prior to beginning Reception class in different schools. The majority of children attend for either five mornings or five afternoons each week.
- Some children attend for additional paid sessions, including lunch and after-school sessions in the adjoining day-care facility. The inspection of this registered early years provision is carried out under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report is available on the Ofsted website.
- The school has seen many staffing changes since the last inspection and most staff, including the headteacher, are relatively new to their roles.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers and assistants routinely pick up on children's conversations as they learn and play, and build on these to develop children's confidence in thinking things out for themselves, in making predictions and in learning to solve problems.
- Improve leadership by making sure that action plans for improvement are more sharply focused on measurable outcomes in terms of children's learning and development and specific areas for improvement in the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Warm and nurturing relationships, supported by careful observation and assessment, ensure that teachers know the children well. This means that children quickly develop confidence and make good progress from their generally lower than expected starting points. By the time they are ready to begin school full time the majority of children are at expected levels in all the areas of learning. In 2012 the majority of children moving on to the Reception Year exceeded expected levels in their use of numbers because of the many chances teachers provide for simple counting on and back in the daily activities.
- The school recently identified that progress in writing was less rapid than progress in other areas of learning. Teachers responded to this by adapting the resources and activities children can choose from to include more opportunities for writing. This is already showing a positive impact and a significant proportion of children have already moved on to the next developmental band in this area.
- The school is very much at the heart of the local community and this is a real source of pride. School leaders ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to thrive. They have forged strong partnerships with parents and with outside agencies that support children and families, including the on-site day-care facility. The impact of this is seen in the outstanding achievement of disabled children, children with special educational needs and those whose circumstances might put them at risk.
- Children quickly gain confidence in reading simple words and many can already recognise their own names. This is because of the well-planned activities to help them develop reading skills using letters and sounds, frequent opportunities to enjoy hearing stories and acting out well-known tales such as 'The Billy Goats Gruff' in role play. As a result, most children enter the Reception Year with skills and abilities in these areas within the range of those expected for their age.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers understand how young children become effective learners and plan a wide range of activities that engage them in purposeful and active learning through play.
- Teachers are particularly good at finding out about children's individual interests both at home and at school and using this to plan activities which are relevant to children's experience yet stimulate them to learn more. For example, children playing with farm animals started to talk enthusiastically about other animals. Teachers followed this up by providing a range of stories and materials about animals in the wild and in zoos, which fired up the children's imagination and led to some lovely artwork, model zoos and even a 'monster house'.
- Children's progress as they move through the nursery is beautifully recorded in 'Learning Journals'. Children are very proud of these books which are displayed in an area always accessible to them and to their families. During the inspection several children happily shared their journals with one another and with adults, highlighting their favourite events and experiences both at home and in school. Their own participation in making a book provides a powerful stimulus to becoming confident readers and writers.
- Adults model good use of language for children, introducing them to an ever-widening vocabulary and supporting their good language and communication development. Teachers' questioning is usually good but they do not always take full advantage of the opportunities to extend children's learning through engaging them in conversations that will help them to think more deeply about what they are doing. This lessens the impact of the activity in developing children's critical thinking skills and their ability to make predictions and solve problems.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most children have good attitudes to learning, as is seen in their willingness to take part in the extensive range of activities on offer and their obvious enthusiasm for coming to school. The vast majority of them attend regularly and are on time each day.
- Warm relationships with adults mean that children feel very safe in the nursery. Parents appreciate this and the robust systems the school has in place to make sure that the buildings are safe and secure as well as welcoming and stimulating for young children. It is due to good behaviour management that very little disruption occurs in learning and play activities.
- Children swiftly develop independence because teachers and assistants encourage them to always 'have a go' for themselves. Resources are readily accessible and children are confident in finding the things they need and using them successfully.
- Classroom routines are well established and this further supports independence and a calm and purposeful atmosphere. For example, children know that they may have a drink and a piece of fruit whenever they wish. They sit down at the snack table and help themselves sensibly and largely without adult supervision. Similarly, children enjoy taking responsibility during the tidying up sessions.
- Children develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. They treat one another well, learning to share toys and to take turns. There is no bullying of any kind and no racist incidents have been recorded. Opportunities throughout the wider curriculum give time for reflection and to begin to explore cultural diversity at an appropriate level for youngsters of this age.

The leadership and management are good

- Exceptionally strong leadership from the new headteacher has already resulted in improvements to the curriculum and to the quality of teaching. Teachers now consistently plan for progress building on activities that children choose for themselves rather than those which are directed and led by adults. Teachers have become increasingly skilled in observing and assessing children's learning and identifying the next small steps to be taken for each individual child.
- The headteacher has rapidly built a strong team of staff, all of whom understand their individual roles as leaders of learning and share her ambition for continuing improvement.
- The proper arrangements are in place for the performance management of staff, leading to appropriate opportunities for training and professional development. Similarly, the systems in place to check on children's progress and help the school to account accurately for its performance are increasingly robust. However, action plans for improvement priorities and objectives set in relation to improving individual teachers' performance are not always focused sharply enough on measurable outcomes for children or specific improvements to the quality of teaching, and this sometimes reduces their effectiveness.
- The area children have to learn and play outdoors is extensive but it is not used as effectively as it could be to support children's learning. The school rightly identifies this as a priority for improvement. All staff have had recent training in outdoor learning, and good plans are being developed to use the school grounds more purposefully and ensure that children's opportunities to learn and play outdoors are as exciting and stimulating as they are indoors.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and have a high profile in the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very much involved in the school. Many are frequent visitors and they sometimes observe sessions to gain a view of how the children are learning. They know the school's strengths as well as its priorities for improvement. They effectively hold the headteacher and staff to account for the school's performance and are actively engaged in the process of improvement planning. Governors secure good financial management of resources and this has made a substantial contribution to the long-term sustainability of the school.

- Governors are involved in the performance management of the headteacher and set appropriately challenging objectives. They are also aware of the school's arrangements for the appraisal of teaching staff and they receive the necessary information on the outcomes from this to allow them to make informed decisions on teachers' pay and progression.

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	108750
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	401008

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Barnett
Headteacher	Ailsa Higgins
Date of previous school inspection	22 June 2010
Telephone number	0191 5536698
Email address	hetton.lyons.nursery@schools.sunderland.gov.uk

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