

Atherstone Nursery School and Early Years Teaching Centre

Kings Avenue, Atherstone, CV9 1JZ

Inspection dates 25–26 November 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Excellent leadership from the headteacher, other senior staff and governors has improved achievement and teaching, despite many recent changes to the school's organisation.
- The headteacher, and all other leaders, concentrate successfully on improving outcomes for all the children. This has meant the recent federation has been used to improve achievement, despite the extra work involved.
- Leaders continually analyse the effect of teaching on children's achievement and refine what they do so that both get better.
- Children make outstanding progress because of their exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and the high quality of teaching.
- Adults are extremely skilled at checking on children's learning and intervening to ensure they make rapid progress.
- Through skilled questioning, adults help children to think hard about what they are doing, to constantly extend their language skills and their knowledge and understanding, in all areas of learning.
- A wide range of activities, both indoors and out, thoroughly engages children's interest. They concentrate well and are purposefully occupied in learning throughout the day.
- Thorough systems to check on children's progress are used extremely well to make sure that activities are interesting and demanding for them.
- The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Adults model and reinforce positive behaviour constantly. As a result, children have excellent relationships with each other and their behaviour is outstanding.
- Children thoroughly enjoy school and feel safe, relaxed and happy there.
- Excellent relationships are maintained with parents, who are very positive about the nursery and their children's experiences there.
- The nursery works very well with other settings for the early years. Through its role as a teaching centre, it has helped other settings to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector spent four lengthy sessions observing teaching and learning across the nursery, both indoors and out. Other observations were made of children being taught in small groups with one or more adults. Several of these observations were undertaken jointly with members of the senior management team.
- Formal discussions were held with members of staff, with representatives of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority. Informal discussions were held with staff and children around the nursery.
- The school's records of children's progress and standards were examined, as well as their 'learning journals' which illustrate individual children's progress through the school.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, particularly that related to keeping children safe and managing the quality of teaching.
- There were not enough replies received to the online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to register. The inspector checked the 17 replies to the school's own survey of parental opinion. He spoke individually to four parents who asked to see him.

Inspection team

Steven Hill, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school currently provides education for 64 children aged three or four. This number is due to increase during the school year, as more children join at the start of each term. The nursery has a capacity for 100 children on roll altogether.
- Almost all children in the school are White British. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- About one in five of the children is disabled or has special educational needs. This is above average.
- Children attend part time, with a variety of patterns available to help meet parents' different needs. All children spend at least one longer session each week in the school, so they are there throughout the lunch period on that day.
- There have been major organisational changes to the school since its previous inspection. The children's centre on the same site, which then shared its management with the nursery, is now led and managed privately. The children's centre will be inspected and reported upon separately.
- The previous headteacher left the school in summer 2013. After an interim period, when a variety of temporary arrangements were in place for leadership, the school formed a federation with Bedworth Heath Nursery School. This has been finalised during this term. The two schools, led by an executive headteacher, now share a governing body and a senior management team.
- The school, along with its partner in the federation, is a designated Early Years Teaching Centre, which provides help and training for other settings within the local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the good work done by staff who take a lead in particular aspects of the school's work, by extending their opportunities to share their expertise with colleagues and improve each other's practice.
- Give staff training on the newly acquired equipment for information and communication technology, so that they can use it to maximum effect in promoting children's learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has established a cohesive staff team whose members have built on the school's previous strengths to make provision outstanding. The consistent focus by leaders on ensuring that children's progress and well-being are at the centre of all decision-making is shared by all staff. As a result, there is a strong emphasis on ensuring that children's pastoral and academic needs are met through excellent teaching. Leaders are continually looking to see how provision can be improved further and refining their practice accordingly.
- The nursery has a consistently calm, purposeful and positive atmosphere, where children throw themselves happily into play, and adults continually boost their learning as they guide their thinking and question them about what they are doing. The example set by adults and their constant reinforcement of high expectations ensure extremely positive attitudes and relationships, and excellent behaviour.
- The senior leadership team monitors teaching carefully and gives colleagues clear feedback on their performance. The constant refinement of practice that results has led to teaching being outstanding. This is enhanced by the greater involvement recently of all leaders in supporting colleagues in improving their teaching through sharing their expertise. This is very effective and the school has plans to extend this further.
- Children's progress is carefully checked and results are used to ensure that all children, regardless of their circumstances or ability, are doing well. Rapid action is taken to help any child who is falling behind, using the expertise within the school as well as from outside as needed. This ensures that the school's strong commitment to equal opportunities is fulfilled extremely well. All children are fully involved in school life, and discrimination is not tolerated.
- Attendance is monitored with similar rigour and action taken to make improvements. Absence levels have fallen considerably over the last two years.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of exciting experiences that ensure children are enthusiastic to learn and enjoy doing so. There is a strong emphasis on children's personal development and communication that is underpinning the rapid progress they make. The excellent emphasis on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that positive attitudes, relationships, cooperation and good behaviour are promoted extremely well. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education and their lives in modern Britain.
- The school continually works to enhance and extend children's experiences. For example, it has recently purchased new information and communication technology equipment, having identified a previous gap in this area. Plans are being made to train staff how to use this equipment to best effect so that it will have the maximum impact on children's achievement.
- The local authority has given extremely effective help to the school since the last inspection. Expertise was provided to boost the effectiveness of leadership when the school was between permanent headteachers. Extremely useful help was provided in smoothing the major changes inherent in losing the management of the children's centre and entering a federation. This helped the school to go from strength to strength, despite all the extra work involved.
- Arrangements for safeguarding children are very thorough. Procedures meet requirements and are followed meticulously, with proper involvement of other agencies where appropriate.
- Links with parents are very positive. The school has a wide range of strategies to involve parents in their children's education and keep them informed. This is greatly appreciated by parents who strongly praise the work of the nursery. Several parents spoke to the inspector and stressed how helpful the school had been to both children and families when they had problems to resolve.
- There are extremely positive links with other schools. The link with the partner school in the federation is

already enabling staff to share expertise and draw on each other's strengths. Work with other schools has helped the school to be sure that its assessments of children's attainment are valid and accurate. Through its work as a Teaching Centre, the nursery contributes positively to the work of others who work with young children in the local authority.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governance is extremely effective and the recently restructured governing body has a clear understanding of children's achievement. They have a good grasp of what the data is showing about children's standards and understand how this is used to boost progress. They know about the school's procedures to monitor and manage teachers' performance, and have ensured that these are suitably used to reward good performance and address any issues. They know the quality of teaching, and how it is being continually refined to ensure this remains high. They take a strong role in working with staff to ensure that children are kept safe and secure in the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. They come into the nursery cheerfully at the start of each session and are quickly and enthusiastically involved in play. They get on extremely well with each other and with the adults, and their behaviour is generally impeccable throughout the day.
- Children thoroughly enjoy learning and talk about what they are doing with enthusiasm. They take a pride in what they have done and appreciate their classmates' efforts.
- When children learn together in small groups, they listen attentively to the adults and each other, and contribute their ideas thoughtfully and eagerly. When they choose activities for themselves, they show high levels of concentration and persist with tasks, seeking the advice, help and involvement of an adult or of a friend if they need it.
- At lunchtimes, children sit to eat their packed lunches and do so very sensibly. They chat happily to staff, and follow their models of good manners and polite conversation, talking about their day, their lunches and healthy eating.
- Relationships are excellent. Children play well together, take turns and share equipment amicably. They collaborate extremely well for their age, for example when building a tower of blocks, or 'cooking' the play-dough cakes they have made. They are kind and helpful to each other and remind each other of rules and routines. They offer each other sensible advice and thoughtfully offer their friends equipment that they need.
- They are starting to understand the wider aspects of good behaviour and attitudes through events such as their fundraising for Children in Need, for example.

Safety

- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding. Procedures are thorough and are followed well. Children themselves clearly feel safe and confident in school. Their parents are very positive about how well their children are looked after.
- Children are consistently and successfully encouraged to be thoughtful and to treat others with kindness and respect. As a result, instances of poor behaviour, such as racism or bullying, are extremely rare. Even minor lapses of politeness are quickly picked up by staff, and children are gently reminded of the right way to behave, saying please or thank you, or 'excuse me' if they want to get past someone.
- Children are developing an excellent understanding of keeping themselves safe, for example, putting warning notices on the climbing equipment when it is too icy to use. As they play, adults successfully encourage them to be safe in their behaviour and to assess for themselves whether an activity is sensible or not. Children contribute to their own and their classmates' safety through their good behaviour and

their consideration for each other.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers are extremely skilled in keeping an eye on all the children and checking that they are involved and playing purposefully. They quickly intervene if any seem to be 'drifting' or not to be doing anything productive, suggesting activities to them, and involving each child in learning. Their excellent knowledge of children's individual abilities and interests means they are able to do this very successfully.
- A key contributor to children's excellent progress is the way that members of staff interact with them during play. Consistently, adults talk to children about what they are doing, helping them to clarify their ideas and developing their language skills and vocabulary. This is extremely effective in developing communication skills which, for many children, are initially very weak. Through searching questioning, pitched to each individual's abilities, adults get children to think through their ideas and consolidate their understanding.
- Regular assessments of children's attainment are kept. These, as well as drawing on children's individual interests and skills, enable staff to plan work that is suitably demanding. Continual feedback to children on their success helps them to refine their learning. For example, when children were jumping from a box they improved their skills in response to an adult's positive encouragement and well-judged advice.
- Early reading and literacy skills are taught extremely well. Children have many opportunities to share a book with an adult, both in small group sessions, or during the course of choosing their own activities. One girl was delighted to work out, after looking at an atlas with an adult, that penguins live 'at the bottom of the world' and polar bears 'at the top.' She suggested that this might be so that the polar bears did not eat the penguins!
- Adults give children lots of chances to start to write with a variety of implements available for mark making. This is done in meaningful contexts such as recording what they have found out in their play.
- Mathematics is taught very effectively. Children have regular opportunities to learn with children of similar ability and where adults teach them key points extremely effectively. This learning is built on very well in activities which children choose themselves, such as identifying the number on magnetic 'fish' they catch in a 'pond'. Adults are quick to reinforce mathematical learning during play. This included getting children to compare the heights of towers they had built, encouraging them to count how many carriages were on a toy train and reinforcing their knowledge of different shapes.
- An excellent balance is kept between activities led by adults and those children choose for themselves, both indoors and out. Adults ensure that learning is equally rapid in both.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children start at the nursery with widely varying skills and understanding. While their range of attainment is broadly typical, many have much weaker skills than those typically seen for their age particularly in communication, in aspects of personal and social development, and in their early literacy and mathematical skills.
- Boys and girls make similarly excellent progress. They do particularly well at first in their communication, personal and social skills. This is because adults successfully focus on developing these areas in all aspects of children's play. This gives children a firm foundation to make excellent progress in all areas of learning as they move through the nursery.
- All children, whatever their home circumstances, make similarly high levels of progress. This is because the school makes use of its excellent liaison with parents, as well as its own assessments, to understand each child's individual needs and provide help and activities that match them. Children who speak English as an additional language learn English quickly and then start to make the same excellent progress as

their classmates.

- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make the same excellent progress as their classmates. This is because adults use their careful assessments of children's abilities to plan activities that are demanding but manageable and that often draw on a child's particular interests. The school frequently enlists the help of parents to back this up with activities at home. Specific help in school is often targeted on a child's particular needs, drawing on the expertise of the school's own staff, as well as that of other agencies, such as the speech and language service.
- The most-able children make outstanding progress from their starting points. They are continually challenged to extend their thinking when adults interact with them during play. In particular, they react positively to the high expectations that adults have when they work with children of similar ability in small groups. This was seen when children consolidated their understanding of numbers to 10 when they compared collections of bricks of different sizes. They showed excellent counting skills, improved their recognition of written numbers and quickly grasped the idea of 'more than'. They started to understand the more complex concept of 'less than' and one or two made a start on adding small numbers together.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- All children in this school are in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The report sections above evaluate the school's effectiveness.

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

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| Unique reference number | 125484 |
| Local authority | Warwickshire |
| Inspection number | 447967 |

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

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| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–4 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 64 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Dean Wainwright |
| Executive Headteacher | Amanda King |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 January 2012 |
| Telephone number | 01827 713116 |
| Fax number | 01827 713116 |
| Email address | admin1000@welearn365.com |

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