

Highfield Nursery School

Wright Street, Chorley, Lancashire, PR6 0SL

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- This is a school where everyone is welcomed and valued. The passionate and dedicated nursery team believe all children and their families deserve the best they can offer. This commitment leads to consistently outstanding achievement for all children.
- Outstanding teaching is underpinned by an excellent understanding of how children learn. 'Together Time' in small groups is used expertly to promote learning across the whole nursery curriculum.
- Children also access an exciting range of play opportunities themselves. Adults offer excellent support for this, playing skilfully alongside them, although children's imaginative play is not encouraged enough.
- Children are excited and enthusiastic learners. Adults are very nurturing and support children extremely well in reaching the very high standards of behaviour expected.
- The headteacher is inspirational and ably supported by a very knowledgeable senior leadership team and governing body. Their vision of maintaining the strong educational principles of a nursery school within an integrated centre with families at its heart is what makes Highfield such a special place.
- The school employs a high proportion of qualified teachers to lead learning. Significant improvements have been made recently in how they make sure all children are doing as well as they can, particularly in early reading, writing and mathematics.
- Parents have complete trust in the school to keep their children safe and to support them however they need it.
- Children receive an excellent start to their education and are very well prepared to move on to the next stage of their learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed all or part of seven sessions in the nursery. The headteacher took part in a joint observation with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at a sample of children's learning journals.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, members of staff, three representatives from the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector spoke to parents and took account of the school's own consultations with parents. There were insufficient responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for the inspector to be able to access them.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents including staff planning books, data on children's progress, reports on teaching and documentation relating to welfare and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Nora Waugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized nursery school. The majority of children attend for three hours each morning or afternoon although flexible provision is available for those families who would like it.
- Most children attend nursery from the term after their third birthday until transferring to Reception classes in local primary schools.
- The large majority of children are from White British backgrounds although an increasing number of children come from a range of minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language.
- An average number of children receive extra help while in nursery, mainly to support their personal, social and emotional development and speech and language needs.
- Currently, six children are supported at early years action plus. Two of these are in receipt of additional inclusion support. There are no children with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school shares the site with Highfield Early Years Centre, Highfield Children's Centre and Highfield Cool Kids. All three providers are subject to separate Ofsted inspection.
- The nursery school operates from the Rainbow Unit which works in a fully integrated way for all children from two to four years accessing the centre.
- The headteacher has a dual role and is also Head of Centre.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the already very skilful support for children learning through self-chosen activities by providing more opportunities to develop children's ability to engage in imaginative play.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children start nursery with skills that vary but which for the large part are below those typical for their age group. Some aspects of personal, social and emotional development are particularly low.
- Children make outstanding progress because of skilful teaching which is precisely matched to individual children's interests and needs. As a result, by the time children leave nursery they are almost all working at a level typical for their age and in many cases above that.
- Critical to this rapid progress is a focus on developing children's personal skills. Adults sensitively explain how to behave in nursery, what the routines are and gently encourage children to work and play together and to support each other. In a large, busy unit, children mix well and are very polite and caring.
- Tasks given to children are achievable and praise is used intelligently to develop children's self-confidence resulting in high levels of well-being. Children are excited and willing to try new experiences.
- Much thought has gone into developing children's language skills. Daily opportunities to work in small groups listening to each other and discussing ideas have made a significant improvement in children's language development.
- The team of staff has worked hard in developing a system that allows them to see the small steps of progress children make. They use it carefully to identify children who need extra help or challenge ensuring that all children make outstanding progress.
- Children who need extra help are identified quickly and given the support they need while playing alongside their friends. Many children quickly catch up but those who do not then have individual programmes designed to meet their needs. Disabled children and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress from their starting points as a result of this.
- An increasing number of children enter nursery speaking very little English. Their families are encouraged to continue to develop children's home language, while in nursery, children are given every opportunity to use their developing skills in English. By the end of nursery, half these children are at the typical level for their age in spoken English and the others are improving swiftly. This demonstrates the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.
- Girls and boys progress equally well. They are all challenged to develop their early reading and writing skills. A group of more able children were thoroughly enjoying finding rhyming words for a spell as they were mixing a potion. Many children draw very well and are beginning to write recognisable letters and words by the time they leave nursery.
- There has been a focus on improving mathematical skills since the last inspection. Children count confidently and enjoy adding numbers together or taking them away as part of their play.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- One teacher described working in the nursery as 'a privilege' and this enthusiasm for their work is infectious. Children come into school in the morning excited and ready to enjoy learning. They quickly choose where to go and begin playing happily.
- Teaching is always good and a high proportion is outstanding. Practitioners have an excellent understanding of how children learn and the skills they need to acquire while in nursery. This allows them to plan activities that exactly match children's interests while moving learning forward.
- Teachers watch children closely and make careful notes of what they are interested in and what they can do. These notes are then expertly used to plan a range of activities designed to interest children and help them learn more.

- When working in small groups in 'Together Time', learning is outstanding because there is a clear focus on what is to be learnt, a breadth of interesting opportunities is provided and highly skilled support for learning is offered. Questioning is outstanding, moving thinking forward and challenging children to develop their own ideas.
- Adults model language wonderfully using a wide range of vocabulary. They sensitively encourage children to join in conversations and are very careful to give children time to respond listening attentively to what they have to say.
- The nursery is a treasure trove, full of exciting things for children to play with and experience. Some self-chosen play is superb as shown by a group of girls on a stage with chiffon scarves making up a complicated dance to Eastern music. At other times, adults do not always encourage children to be imaginative in their thinking.
- The outdoor area has been carefully developed to provide lots of interesting opportunities for learning in a different way. The mud kitchen has recipes for making mud coffee or bark pie while observing tadpoles with a teacher encourages children's curiosity about living things. There is also space to run, climb or play with your friends.
- Early reading, writing and mathematical skills are cleverly taught through play and build on children's interests. A child following the mud coffee recipe counted spoonfuls of water and was helped in checking she had put in all the ingredients from the card. Other children were busy writing cards as part of an activity celebrating the centre's 10th birthday.
- The benefits of being part of an integrated centre are used extremely well to promote wider aspects of learning. Every Tuesday, children and adults collecting them can go together to make a healthy snack to take home. Vegetable and cheese kebabs involved learning about hygiene, discovering new foods and the tricky business of putting cherry tomatoes onto a skewer.
- Children's learning journals reflect their time in nursery and the progress they have made. These show clearly and in a lively way both the skills children have mastered and the fun they have had in this special place for children.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. When children first come to nursery they are gently and very kindly helped to learn what is expected of them and to behave as part of a community. Children learn quickly and as a result, are polite and very caring. Adults quickly offer exactly the right level of support if there are any signs of conflict or disagreement.
- Relationships are excellent throughout the nursery. This stems from the respect teachers have for each other and for children as individuals. Each child is part of a small group with a particular practitioner helping them feel secure and able to behave in a very natural and spontaneous way.
- Practitioners and children share the joy of learning together and celebrate children's successes with enthusiasm. This enjoyment of learning lays the foundations for children to become lifelong learners.
- Transition into nursery and then into school is carefully planned and tailored to meet the needs of each individual child. Attendance improves during the school year as children are reluctant to miss nursery. Absence is carefully followed up.
- The nursery's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding. Parents are very confident that children are safe in nursery. Their responses to questionnaires show that they feel bullying does not happen. Children are encouraged to be adventurous and run down a slope or climb within an environment that is intrinsically safe. Being part of a wider centre, parents are encouraged to learn about all aspects of keeping children safe and receive excellent advice, for example about purchasing car seats.
- The nursery is very welcoming to parents and very prepared to listen to their concerns. Being in the same building and part of the children's centre enables parents to receive exactly the right level of support to meet their needs.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is inspirational. She has a strong vision of an outstanding nursery school at the heart of an integrated centre. She has worked tirelessly to put this in place and is ably supported by both her leadership team and middle leaders in the centre. Families bringing their children to the nursery school benefit enormously from the wider opportunities this extended provision affords them.
- Leaders know the school inside out and have an extremely accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development. They all work together to identify priorities and continually evaluate how well things are working. Creating an integrated unit for two- to four-year-olds was a brave step. It is now working well to the benefit of all children and the wider staffing team.
- The school employs a senior teacher plus two other qualified teachers. Together, they lead learning and provide the impetus for high quality play and learning across the unit. They share the headteacher's passion about giving children the best opportunities they can. They constantly try to improve on what they already do. Recent changes to planning enable them to better meet each individual child's interests while still seeing themselves as part of a larger group.
- Performance management and professional development are used to further develop the wonderful team ethos with shared targets and developments while at the same time allowing individual skills to flourish.
- Parents are very positive about the school and know their children thrive there. Asked to give comments about what the nursery meant for them, 'confidence', 'freedom' 'smiles' and 'dedicated' were among the words used. Parents and grandparents from a variety of backgrounds celebrating the 10th birthday of the building with a coffee and cake reflected this warmth and the special qualities of Highfield.
- The curriculum is carefully thought through to be exciting and stimulating. The balance of activities and experiences available across a day is excellent. Sometimes, children work directly with adults and at other times choose themselves from the extremely interesting options available. Indoor and outdoor learning are equally valued. Children can also freely access two sensory rooms which gives their play a completely different perspective.
- In a busy nursery, time is still found for children to be calm and quiet. There are also small moments of absolute wonder, for example when finding a mini-beast. Cultural development is promoted very well using the different cultures represented in the nursery as a starting point.
- All policies and procedures are securely in place and most are available on the very informative website. Those relating to safeguarding are suitably thorough reflecting the high priority given to this.
- The school has a close relationship with the local authority and appreciates the support given.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school extremely well. They are active and interested and not afraid to ask questions and check their understanding. As a consequence, they know that teaching is outstanding. Governors keep a close eye upon finance, including rewarding teachers through pay or promotion.
 - They value the encouragement they receive to drop into school any time as well as more structured visits and feel very much part of it. They see the inclusivity and welcoming ethos as a huge strength.
 - They are very proud of the role the centre plays in the community and use their considerable skills to help this develop further. One is currently developing closer links with the Polish community. They are rigorous in ensuring that all statutory requirements including those related to safeguarding are met.

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	119067
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	439938

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Holt
Headteacher	Alison Hindle
Date of previous school inspection	29 March 2011
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