

Batford Nursery School

Holcroft Road, , Harpenden, AL5 5HN

Inspection dates 24–25 January 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.

- Exceptional leadership, outstanding levels of care and high quality teaching ensure children thrive and flourish in the nursery.
- Underpinning the school's success is the headteacher's skill, dedication and care.
- High quality resources and imaginative learning opportunities help all children to make rapid progress in their learning. They are working well above what is expected for their age.
- The outstanding progress all children make is strengthened by an excellent, relevant and very practical range of learning experiences. Learning indoors and outdoors is exciting and challenging.
- Outstanding teaching is maintained by rigorous management checks on quality and high quality training.
- Teachers' expectations of what children can achieve are consistently high. They step in expertly to guide learning through thought provoking questioning and by teaching particular skills. Consequently, children develop outstanding personal qualities. They are independent, able to make decisions and take responsibility.
- The behaviour and safety of children are outstanding and the promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- Governors work extremely well with the headteacher in planning for the development of the school. Leaders at all levels are passionately committed to maintaining the outstanding quality of education provided by the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning sessions over a total period of five hours. Joint observations with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher were carried out in two shorter sessions.
- Learning was observed indoors and outside. Displays and records of children's work were examined. The inspector looked at samples of records showing progress made by children who currently attend the nursery.
- All members of the teaching team present during the two days of the inspection were seen working with children. A session of the lunchtime arrangements was also observed. Opportunities were taken throughout the inspection to talk with the children.
- A range of documents were examined, including policies, training records, the record showing checks carried out on staff, data showing children's progress in the last three years, records of the monitoring of teaching, information relating to safeguarding and a sample of governing body minutes.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff representatives, a representative of the local authority and three members of the governing body.
- Informal discussions were held with several parents and the responses of 38 parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were analysed.
- Questionnaires completed by 13 staff were taken into account.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average sized nursery school. The nursery school is the lead agency for the two Children's Centres in the area, providing services to the local community, one of which is situated on the nursery school site. The governing body and the headteacher manage and have overall responsibility for the two Children's Centres.
- Children attend in the morning or the afternoon. A very small number attend the Nursery all day and some children access the wrap-around registered day care situated on the nursery school site. The registered childcare and the two children's centres are inspected separately and reported on the Ofsted website.
- Most children are from White British backgrounds with a few from a range of minority ethnic families. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs supported at 'early years action' is below average.
- The proportion of children supported at 'early years action plus' or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Because of their age, no children are entitled to the pupil premium funding.
- No alternative provision is used by the school.
- There are three teachers at the school. The headteacher has been in post for 13 years, and is retiring at the end of the summer term 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the governing body can maintain the school's outstanding effectiveness and continued development and improvement by:
 - appointing and inducting a high calibre successor when the headteacher retires.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children start at the Nursery with skills at the level expected for their age. By the time they leave, they have made good and, in some cases, exceptional progress, and many have skills way beyond those which would be expected.
- Children are making excellent progress after only one term. They are already showing signs of being effective learners as they find out how things work and persevere with challenging activities. This was observed by the inspector when children were using the I-Pads to write a caption for the pictures they had created and when they worked with scissors to cut out their own jigsaw puzzles.
- Children make excellent progress with their physical development because they have many stimulating opportunities to be involved in a wide range of imaginative activities, both indoors and out. They learn to pass balls, dig with big spades, build camps and create snowy landscapes. Children know that in cold weather they must put on coats, hats and gloves and do this readily without help.
- Children build confident communication skills because of the emphasis adults place on speaking and listening. Reading is promoted extremely well by all staff and as a result children love books, listen to stories attentively and with interest. They often retell and re-enact the stories they have heard through play.
- They quickly develop the skill of linking letters with the sounds they make (phonics), to recognise and write their own names. They tell stories of their own and these are carefully recorded and displayed by staff. The strong emphasis on language work enables children to make exceptional progress. Children acquire and practise mark-making and early writing skills very successfully.
- Children make good progress in developing their numeracy skills because of the good opportunities provided. For example, children explored how many jugs of water were needed to fill larger containers. They acquired and applied useful mathematical vocabulary such as 'empty', 'more than' and 'full'. The skilful questioning of the teacher challenged children's thinking skills as they solved a problem that involved working out how many ducks had gone missing from the pond.
- Children have many opportunities to explore and express themselves creatively. They thoroughly enjoy using different colours as they busily create attractive patterns using a wide range of paints. The finger painting sessions and the snow scene pictures using glitter and glue were a source of much enjoyment. They enjoy making music together and readily join in songs, remembering the words and the melodies accurately.
- The needs of disabled children and those who have special educational needs are quickly identified. Early assessments ensure that staff know which children need extra support and so work can begin immediately on helping them to become successful learners. All adults are aware of the children's needs and the high quality support enables the children to make excellent progress.
- Children are very independent; they tidy all the equipment away at the end of the session and because the resources are very well organised it enables them to do this. They wash their hands

before eating their healthy snacks as a matter of course.

- Children are very keen to come to the nursery where relationships are warm and highly supportive. Their outstanding progress in language, literacy and numeracy together with their highly developed personal and social skills prepares them very successfully for their next school and later life.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Much of the teaching is outstanding and this has led to outstanding progress being made by most children across the age and ability range. Activities are matched extremely well to children's needs and interests. There are examples of inspirational teaching and staff succeed in generating a real sense of excitement in the nursery.
- Staff have a very secure knowledge and understanding of how children of this age learn. Very skilful teaching successfully promotes outstanding learning and much enjoyment for children. Staff are very focused on each individual's needs and aspirations and this is why the more able children and those who find learning difficult all do exceptionally well.
- Staff are a very effective team and as key workers they build up very close relationships with children and their families which helps children to learn effectively.
- Adults know when to intervene and when to let children follow their own lines of enquiry and this helps them to develop excellent independent learning skills. Children move freely between indoors and outdoors as they take ownership of their own learning, and show enthusiasm to explore and investigate all the exciting things on offer.
- Open-ended activities encourage children to use their imaginations. An example of this on a snowy day during the inspection was when the ridge of snow was turned into a colourful landscape using powder paints. Children are constantly being asked questions to make them think and to encourage them to talk actively about their learning.
- Highly effective assessment procedures provide a clear overview of each child's attainment. This information is used very well to plan the next steps of children's learning. Daily discussions by all staff effectively refocus teaching and support to meet individual needs.
- Checks on children's progress are extremely thorough. Children's performance and learning experiences are well recorded in individual folders with detailed comments and photographs. Findings are then discussed with families, when targets for improving their child's progress are shared.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs, for example communication or physical difficulties make good progress as a result of the support of highly skilled and experienced staff and very effective provision.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Nursery staff have excellent relationships with the children and this is a key reason why they settle so quickly and happily and so are ready to learn. Strong emphasis is placed on promoting children's self-esteem and confidence, which is reflected, in their outstanding personal

development.

- Children's behaviour is exemplary, either when working with an adult, or playing independently. They show considerable support for one another and readily get along well together.
- They learn to appreciate diversity through celebrating religious festivals and they also enjoy a range of books, art and music that feature cultures from around the world. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally well promoted and supports the happy atmosphere found in the nursery.
- There is no evidence of bullying, name calling or racism. Children say they love coming to school and the level of absence is very low.
- Children know how to keep themselves safe, whether it be in the snowy outside area or negotiating the flight of stairs as they carefully hold the handrails. They know to talk with a familiar adult if they have any worries.
- Parents say that their children are safe at Nursery and very well cared for by the staff. They value the relationship with the key workers.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is a highly experienced early years' practitioner. She leads the nursery school, which is at the heart of a range of family support services, with passion and quiet determination. This is the main reason why the school's outstanding effectiveness has been sustained since the last inspection.
- Her drive and vision have enthused all staff over a long period of time. With the governors, she and her deputy headteacher, lead a highly committed staff team. They have successfully maintained the high levels of children's achievement. They make sure that the very best in resourcing, both equipment and staff, result in a stimulating, nurturing and exemplary Nursery environment.
- Together, senior leaders continuously move the school forward, building upon its strengths. Systems to check children's' achievements are thorough and detailed. Reflective and self-critical approaches make certain that any weaknesses in the quality of provision are promptly identified and quickly addressed. Consequently, the school's view of its performance is accurate.
- The school provides an excellent range of professional development for staff. It is firmly based on the priorities in the school development plans and also on individual professional development needs. The links with the children's centre and other early years' provision on the site are strong.
- The local authority recognises the high quality of the school's work, using it as an example of excellent practice. The school supports nursery education across the local area.
- The school's success in promoting equality of opportunity and in eliminating any form of discrimination is shown by the fact that children whose circumstances make them vulnerable achieve just as well as everyone else.
- Arrangements for safeguarding, including training for staff and governors, are thorough and meet current requirements. All welfare requirements for children under the age of five are fully

met.

- The headteacher is retiring in the summer and to assist with this transition, changes in leadership have been made. Leaders and governors recognise the challenge that a change in headteacher can bring. They have planned to ensure a smooth transition, including the appointment of a temporary deputy headteacher. Leadership is very effectively distributed among staff who demonstrate highly effective leadership and management in their areas of responsibility.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an excellent understanding of the nursery's strengths and areas which they want to develop. Governors are fully involved in checking the progress the school makes towards achieving its priorities. They maintain their knowledge of educational developments through regular training updates. They manage the headteacher's performance review and they check regularly on the impact of teachers' performance targets. They hold the school to account very well making sure that targets are linked directly to the quality of teaching, children's progress, and reflected in salary progression. They are fully engaged in the life of the school and are ambitious to maintain the school's exceptional qualities. This is why they have put in place well thought out transition arrangements until changes to the leadership have been secured. Governors have rigorous and effective controls to ensure the efficient use of finances.

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	117068
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401640

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	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Libby Montgomery
Headteacher	Madelaine Lee
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2010
Telephone number	01582 713872
Fax number	01582 713118
Email address	admin@batfordnursery.herts.sch.uk

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