

Strong Close Nursery School and Children's Centre

Airedale Road, Keighley, West Yorkshire, BD21 4LW

Inspection dates

27–28 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide clear leadership for all staff. Consequently, teaching is good and improving, and children make big strides forward in their learning.
- Children with specific learning difficulties make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress because their individual needs are supported very skilfully by staff.
- Children's behaviour is good and is the result of good relationships with staff, including in their small groups. Children accept differences between people and understand each child and family are unique.
- The governing body has a detailed and accurate knowledge of the school. Their support and challenge to leaders and staff has helped the continued improvement in teaching and in children's achievement.
- Staff place great emphasis upon supporting children to be ready for school. This makes sure that children enjoy learning, and are becoming confident, happy and keen to gain new knowledge. The school is a safe environment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Children's progress in mathematics is not as rapid as in other areas of learning.
- Links to other schools that lead to improved teaching at Strong Close are at an early stage of development.
- Some children are not benefitting from school as much as they should because parents do not make sure that they attend whenever possible.
- While school plans and targets for staff are helping the school to improve, some records do not have enough detail to help the school to be even better still.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning and teaching in four nursery sessions and spoke to children. Some teaching was observed jointly with the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with five members of the governing body, senior staff and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents, including school records of the quality of teaching, records of teacher targets, data about children's progress, self-evaluation and the school development plans.
- The inspector spoke to some parents and carers and considered 19 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and the school's own annual survey of parents in 2012 and 2013.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Strong Close is larger than the average-sized nursery school.
- The school brings together early years education and care with support for families on one site. The school's headteacher and governing body are responsible for the maintained nursery school, a registered crèche and a phase one children's centre (designated in February 2007).
- There is a separately registered early years setting on site, Strong Close Day Nursery, managed by the Pre-school Learning Alliance, whose three- and four-year olds and staff frequently spend time in the classrooms with school children. Neither the children's centre nor the early years setting were part of this inspection. Their reports are available on the Ofsted website.
- The proportion of children who receive extra help from school staff because they have been identified as having special educational needs (school action) is above average. The proportion who are supported by external specialists because of their needs (school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs) is above average.
- The school provides 16 places in specially resourced provision for children with special educational needs. Children have a range of learning difficulties. All are included in the classes with other children.
- Approximately half of the children are from minority ethnic families and about a third of all children speak English as an additional language.
- The school has achieved Investors in People status.
- The school was part of 'The Bradford Early Years Teaching Centre' funded by the Department for Education between April 2011 and March 2013. In 2013, it became part of the 'Bradford Birth to 19 Teaching School Alliance'; an alliance of over forty schools led by St Edmund's Nursery School and Children's Centre.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise children's achievement in mathematics by:
 - making the best of opportunities to develop children's mathematical skills across nursery activities
 - improving the subject knowledge of all staff about mathematics
 - checking that children are on course to understand those aspects of mathematics that were new in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage from September 2012.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding by:
 - sharing the outstanding teaching that is already in the school
 - increasing the opportunities for leaders, teachers and early years practitioners to observe outstanding teaching in other schools.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - fine-tuning school priorities and teacher targets so that records specify in more detail what will count as improvement.
- Improve behaviour and safety by:
 - working even closer with parents to raise the level of children's attendance at school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children enter the school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are below those typical for their age. They make good progress while at the school and achieve well. Gaps between different groups of children are narrowing year on year because the school is making increasingly careful use of data about individual children and groups to review the impact of teaching. For example, school data shows that children are becoming well prepared for the next stage of their schooling because they are confident learners, able to listen and communicate and able to move and handle themselves skilfully.
- Staff are deeply interested in what children do and say. It is not uncommon in classes to find staff and children immersed in meaningful conversation. Consequently, children want to talk. During the inspection, a number of children were very keen to speak to the inspector. For example, a three-year old boy, who when racing past the inspector outdoors, skidded to a halt, turned, and remarked, 'Who are you? I haven't seen you before.'
- Children start in Nursery with very low skills in mathematics and their subsequent progress is not as fast as in other areas of learning. Leaders are not complacent and have identified that improving teaching and achievement in mathematics is a priority. As a result, children's progress in mathematics is improving well. More attention is now necessary to ensure that children achieve the higher-level aspects of mathematics that were added to the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage from September 2012.
- Children are developing good early reading skills. This is because staff make full use of a wide range of stories, information books, musical activities, and practising the sounds that words and letters make. There are also a good range of library books to take home. Staff place high value upon children's own attempts to draw and write, resulting in children being confident to 'have a go' at writing.
- The most able children make good progress from their higher starting points. Much of the reason for this is good teaching and high expectations from staff. The most able children have many opportunities to help their classmates as well as spend time in small teaching groups with staff.
- Children from minority ethnic groups and those who are bilingual, for whom English is an additional language, make good progress during their time at nursery school. This is because the school values the heritage and language of every family, and staff ensure that children are helped to get on well with one another. There is no record of any discrimination.
- Disabled children and children who have special educational needs make similar progress to other children in the school because staff get to know their needs well, and use this when planning teaching. Children with special educational needs who have a specially resourced place at the school make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. This is because their allocated staff show immense dedication, patience and attention in helping them to make small and very significant steps in their learning.
- Most parents recognise the progress that their children make at school, for example, saying, 'It's wonderful – they learn so much here. People come from all around to get their child a place'.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. This is because leaders have high expectations for teaching and have helped staff to access further qualifications in early years education. Staff benefit from good access to training opportunities which have improved their teaching skills and increased their expectations of all children. For example, participation in a programme aimed at raising children's achievement in early language has improved staff knowledge about the value of talk and communication. Consequently, children make much greater progress in their language development due to better teaching. However, teaching is not yet outstanding to

ensure that children make excellent progress during their time at the school.

- School data and self-evaluation, together with inspection evidence indicate that while teaching is good across the areas of learning, it is having less impact in mathematics. This is because staff do not have excellent subject knowledge of mathematics and do not always make the most of every opportunity to teach mathematics across the curriculum. Nevertheless, children do make good progress in their mathematical learning through playing with wooden blocks, number games and rhymes, jigsaws and sorting and matching activities supported by staff.
- The large team of staff work well together and early years practitioners play a vital and highly valued role in teaching children. All staff involve children well in the many opportunities to talk, listen, investigate, get physical, be involved and concentrate. They place great emphasis upon teaching children to write, draw and know the sounds that letters make. This helps children to be ready for their move to primary school because they develop great enthusiasm to discover and learn.
- Staff teach children well about spiritual, moral, social and cultural matters. Careful consideration is given to completing sponsored activities for charities, celebrating festivals such as Eid and St Patrick's Day and promoting Black History Month.
- The most able children are taught skilfully because staff know children in detail. This ensures that teachers and early years practitioners adapt activities to provide sufficient challenge.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Some families do not always bring children to every session to which they are entitled. While the school does take swift action to follow up absences, attendance is not as high as it could be.
- The behaviour of children is good. Children settle quickly for group times because staff help children to understand when it is time to listen, share or follow instructions. There are no recorded instances of bullying or exclusions. A very small number of parents responding to the online survey said that the school does not make sure that children are well behaved.
- Children are eager to learn and parents bring them to school promptly. The three classrooms and outdoor area are organised very successfully: the children know where toys and resources are kept and understand how to get them out and put them away. Children feel at ease in nursery and show high levels of independence.
- Children are kind and caring towards one another and enjoy having visitors such as the Police and Fire Brigade. They were very friendly to the school inspector, wanting to show him around and explain the various activities to him. Children's relationships with staff are very good.
- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is good. Safety arrangements are checked well by staff and members of the governing body. Thorough procedures for checking visitors and appropriate risk assessments mean that the school is a safe environment. Children know that visitors wear a sticker. Staff give thoughtful advice so that children can use scissors, hammers, computers and wheeled toys safely. Children know how to stay healthy by washing their hands.

The leadership and management are good

- Targets for staff and nursery plans identify appropriate priorities for improvement and these are raising the quality of teaching and children's achievement. However, some records do not identify in enough detail how progress will be assured. This makes it difficult for leaders and members of the governing body to always judge the impact of action taken.
- Leaders set a good example for staff. They work very well together and have a good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and have links to wider early years colleagues. However, staff do not have many opportunities to learn from formally watching the very best teaching in this school or other schools.
- Leaders set a clear direction for the school, supporting staff, enabling improvements and

reviewing progress. Areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection have been tackled in full. For example, middle leaders now play a key role in coordinating the work of the school in different areas of the curriculum. Staff across the school feel supported in their roles and the school's resourced provision for children with special educational needs is managed successfully. The curriculum across the school is fully thought out and interesting.

- Child protection and safeguarding procedures within the school meet statutory requirements. Appropriate safe recruitment practices are in place. Staff have good access to child protection training.
- The headteacher keeps a close eye on how well children are doing, including each individual, group and cohort. The headteacher and deputy check the quality of teaching thoroughly. Consequently, they have an accurate overview of teaching in the school. Support for new and experienced teachers and early years practitioners is coordinated well and has improved teaching across classrooms. Information from observations of teaching as well as data about children's progress are used appropriately to decide whether teachers should be paid more.
- Given the previous success of the school, support from the local authority has been light touch. Most recently, this has been to support the governing body with setting targets for the headteacher.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body know what is happening in the school because they visit regularly and ask questions of leaders and staff about teaching and about children's progress. Consequently, they know that teaching is good and that children's learning in mathematics is an area for increased attention. They keep a close eye upon finance including the rewarding of teachers through pay, and they know about the performance of staff. Members of the governing body attend a wide range of training relevant to their roles including about the safe recruitment of staff. The governing body ensures that the school premises are safe and secure and that children are safeguarded. They provide a good level of challenge to the headteacher about improvement and future priorities, ensuring that the school is well placed to improve further.

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	107185
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	430854

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	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Gilhome
Headteacher	Beverly George
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2011
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