

Kingsland Nursery School

Eaves Lane, Bucknall, Stoke On Trent, ST2 8JY

Inspection dates

25–26 March 2014

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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children make good and sometimes outstanding progress from starting points that are generally well below those typical for their age. They move on to primary school with skills closer to those typical for their age.
- Teaching is good and sometimes it is outstanding. Staff have a good understanding of how young children learn.
- Staff know the children as individuals exceptionally well and use this information to make the children feel special and to boost their self-confidence.
- The behaviour of children is outstanding. They love coming to school and enjoy learning. Children feel safe and secure in a wonderfully creative and stimulating learning environment.
- Excellent links exist with parents and the local community. Parents are very positive about school and the guidance they receive in helping their children to learn.
- The executive headteacher has 'steadied the ship' following a period of instability caused by three changes in headteacher in as many years. Her passion and drive have galvanised staff and governors in sharing her clear vision.
- The progress of each child is carefully checked and this information is used to plan the next steps in their learning.
- Governors, including those new to their role, know the school well and provide a good level of support and challenge to school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to help children make outstanding progress in all areas. Children, particularly the most able, are not always moved on to harder work quickly enough.
- Staff do not find enough opportunities to encourage children to talk about what they are doing and think hard for themselves.
- Leaders do not check often enough whether teaching is helping children to make the best possible progress. The system that shows how well children's learning is benefiting from planned improvements is not clear enough.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning during the morning and afternoon sessions on both days, two of which were observed jointly with the executive headteacher. In addition, the inspector checked children's learning journals and scrutinised the school's performance information with the executive headteacher and the lead teacher.
- The inspector examined a range of documents including, the school's improvement plan, the school's view of its own performance, the monitoring of staff performance and those related to children's progress. The inspector also checked records relating to safeguarding and children's behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector spoke with children and had discussions with the senior staff, parents and a member of staff from the primary. He also held meetings with three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, governors and a representative and the local authority.
- The inspector took account of 17 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), the school's surveys of parental opinion and eight staff questionnaire responses.

Inspection team

Chris Maloney, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Kingsland Nursery is an average-sized nursery school and shares the site with a children's centre, kindergarten and primary school which are subject to separate inspections, as are the before and after-school clubs on offer.
- Children attend full time and stay for lunch. The proportion of children attending the nursery who are known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than usual.
- The vast majority of children are White British. The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is very low.
- The proportion of children supported through early action is broadly average and the proportion supported through early action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The executive headteacher was appointed on a temporary basis in September 2013 and this was made permanent in January 2014. She is also the substantive headteacher of the primary school and a director of the kindergarten on site.
- There have been significant changes in staff and the governing body since the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding and so accelerate children's progress by ensuring that:
 - every opportunity is taken to extend children's learning as soon as they are ready, particularly the most able
 - children are always encouraged to speak as much as they can and to think hard for themselves.
- Improve leadership and management further, by ensuring that:
 - school leaders are always crystal clear about how the impact of planned actions to improve the quality of teaching and children's achievement will be measured
 - more opportunities are taken to check on the quality of teaching to see whether all children are making the best possible progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the nursery with skills and knowledge that are well below and sometimes exceptionally low compared to those typically found for their age, particularly in language, number, social development and understanding of the world. Children achieve well and make good and sometimes outstanding progress. There is little difference in the progress of boys and girls. However, their skills are generally still below those typically found by the time they move on to primary school because not enough of them have made rapid progress, particularly the most able.
- The very strong focus on developing children's personal, social and emotional development underpins their good achievement. They quickly learn to rely less on adults to help them dress or choose equipment, such as magnifiers to help them explore mini-beasts outside. Children concentrate for long periods, share and take turns, when using wheeled vehicles and listen carefully to adults and follow directions. They know the importance of wearing the right type of clothes to keep them warm and dry when they eagerly put on their waterproofs to choose to learn outside when it is raining.
- Children make good progress in their writing skills because they are provided with many exciting opportunities to start writing. They enjoy copying their own names or the names of characters in stories they have read, such as Rosie's Walk. However, the most able children show that they are ready to write a little more than this.
- Their progress in reading is increasing. Children enjoy working with adults in small groups to learn and practise letters and the sounds they make (phonics) to help them to read simple words. These skills are reinforced by the use of the exciting range of books and the many labels and questions around the indoor and the magical outdoor learning area. Children love to sit on the hay bales in the wonderful 'Bottle Kiln' outside and enjoy familiar stories.
- The strong focus on developing mathematical skills is helping children have a better grasp of numbers in particular. Children have many opportunities to recognise numbers to 20 and put numbers into sequence. They practise their number skills when racing on bikes and learn about the different shapes in buildings in the grounds, such as Kingsland Castle. The most able children tackle these activities easily and are ready to try greater mathematical challenges.
- The wonderfully creative learning environment helps children to develop their imagination when, for example, using the exciting 'mud' kitchen to make meals for the three bears, following a visit from a theatre company. Boys in particular, love to explore the world of super heroes when using the scrambling nets, climbing wall or camouflaged tunnels. These excellent resources also help to develop children's physical skills in balancing and negotiating spaces and different levels.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Their needs are identified quickly and well supported. Those who need it benefit greatly from the school's close working with speech therapists and other professionals. Individual education plans have clear and measurable targets to help children make good progress. The very few children from minority ethnic backgrounds or those who speak English as an additional language also make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Records show that teaching is always at least good, including in literacy and mathematics, and sometimes outstanding. Staff have a good understanding of the different ways young children learn and use this knowledge well to plan exciting and interesting learning opportunities for all children. As a result, children achieve well and enjoy their learning.
- Staff work well as a team and have high expectations of children's behaviour and attitudes. They pride themselves on knowing the children and their families extremely well and a key strength is the way in which different staff share information so that all children have equal opportunities to

learn. This also helps to build highly positive relationships. The staff are all extremely caring and sensitive to the needs of children and welcoming to parents. A typical comment from a parent during the inspection was, 'We are always welcome and staff are always there for us when we need advice or have any worries.'

- From the moment they enter the nursery, children are taught to follow well-established routines, register themselves, and plan their learning. They quickly learn to follow rules for sharing equipment, such as mini-computers, knowing where to find the toys and equipment they wish to use or in taking responsibility for tidying up the room. This helps children to develop their self-confidence and independence.
- Children are often encouraged to follow their interests and staff support them with probing questions challenging children to think hard. For example, when a group of children were exploring fruit and vegetables leading to experimenting on what would happen to the peelings if left out of the fridge. After having the opportunity to think hard, a child wrote that, 'This is squashy, it will go mouldy'.
- Excellent use is made of lunchtimes to extend children's learning. Children have full access to the wonderful outside area where staff take turns in supporting their learning and enjoyment of school.
- Activities that will involve and interest children are carefully planned and close observations of learning and checks on their progress are regularly made. However, not every opportunity is grasped to challenge children's thinking for themselves and move them on to more demanding work, quickly enough. Sometimes, adults are too quick to give an answer rather than encouraging children to think and work things out for themselves, or to talk about their ideas to an adult or other children. This is particularly so for the most able children and is hindering them in making more rapid progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. They love coming to school and are eager and excited to learn. Although attendance is currently below average, it is recovering quickly from when some significant bouts of illness occurred. A typical parental comment was, 'As soon as he wakes up in the morning he talks of nothing else but going to school. That makes me really happy as a parent.'
- Children get on exceptionally well with each other. School records reflect that there is no bullying or poor behaviour. Simple disagreements are sorted out quickly and soon forgotten. Children share equipment and toys very well and have mature attitudes to taking turns. This was reflected in children sharing magnifying glasses and riding wheeled vehicles outside. As one boy told the inspector, 'It's my friend's turn now to have a go. That's only fair, isn't it?'
- Children show a sense of awe and wonder when involved in much of their learning. For example, children were very excited in exploring how to build a shelter for a chicken in the school woodland area, using materials they found nearby. Here they learned how to use tools safely. A consultant from the scheme encouraging outdoor learning helped them to whittle wood safely, a skill that many of their parents had used in a recent parents' workshop.
- Children concentrate for long periods of time, for example, working together to solve problems such as building walkways to stay off the ground. They enjoy practising how to use a knife and fork when sitting down together with staff to have their lunchtime meal. Staff encourage children to show excellent manners when choosing what to eat.
- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding. Excellent entry and exit systems are extremely rigorous in controlling who should be on site. Children feel safe in the knowledge that the adults manage any risks exceptionally well. As one child commented, 'Only good people are allowed in our school.' Another child said, 'The teacher helps to look after us and we don't get hurt.' Conversations with parents show that they have complete trust in staff to keep their children safe and happy.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher, ably supported by the lead teacher, has successfully invigorated staff and governors following an unsettling period of significant changes to the staff and governors. Her highly infectious enthusiasm, passion and desire are shared by staff and governors and this is helping to focus everyone's attention on the areas that need to improve. As a result, the school is moving forward with renewed energy. Improvements are evident in teaching, achievement, attendance and the accuracy of assessments of just how well children are learning in the relatively short time since her appointment.
- Senior leaders, supported by all staff, who each take on some responsibilities, have an accurate view of the school's performance, its strengths and weaknesses. They know what needs to be improved further and have put plans in place to make this happen. However, it is not always clear how the success of such plans will be measured in improving teaching and children's progress.
- Checks are made on progress so that children who are underachieving or have particular needs receive additional skilled support to help them improve their learning. This reflects the school's commitment to providing all children with equal opportunities to learn.
- The staff are well trained and have good opportunities to share further training and their practice with others in the primary school. Checks are made on the quality of teaching so that any underperformance can be tackled and staff supported. However, these checks are not currently undertaken often enough so that senior leaders can see for themselves just why some children, particularly the most able, are not always making as much progress as they should.
- The different areas of learning are linked together very creatively and excellent use is made of the superb learning areas, both inside and particularly outside, to provide interesting and exciting challenges for children.
- Excellent links exist with parents who value highly the support and guidance they receive. Staff regularly share children's 'Learning Journey' records with parents so that the children's achievements at school and home can be celebrated. Strong links also exist with the Kingsland Children's Centre and with the kindergarten on site. These promote excellent working relationships with outside agencies, such as speech therapists, health visitors and social workers in support of families and their children.
- The local authority has provided good support in strengthening leadership and management during a period of significant change.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors, including those new to their role, know the school well and improve their understanding by working closely with senior staff to rigorously check the information they receive. The new Chair of the Governing Body is highly ambitious for the school and works very closely with the executive headteacher, meeting weekly to keep moving the school forward. Governors are linked to different aspects of the work of the school and are keen to further improve this part of their work. They have high expectations and are very enthusiastic in sharing the vision and drive of the headteacher. They have ensured that teachers' pay rewards are clearly linked to children making good rather than expected progress. They track the progress of all groups of children and are determined to raise achievement further. They carefully monitor the use of all finances and ensure that safeguarding meets requirements.

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	123957
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	431147

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	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Dowle
Headteacher	Sara Goddard
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2011
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