

Rye Park Nursery School

Walton Road, Hoddesdon, EN11 0LN

Inspection dates 5–6 December 2012

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.

- Children are made to feel extremely welcome at the Nursery because staff are very friendly and there are many exciting things for them to do from the minute they arrive.
- Children achieve outstandingly well because staff take children's interests as the starting point for planning a very wide range of activities.
- Children make excellent progress because teaching is outstanding and based on an excellent understanding of how young children learn.
- The headteacher's inspirational leadership means that all staff work together as a strong team and do the best they can for the children.
- Children's behaviour is outstanding because staff manage them extremely well and ensure they are safe at all times.
- The school has improved in many ways since its last inspection because staff have welcomed new ideas. The Nursery is now even better at helping children learn to communicate and speak.
- Leaders, managers and governors work exceptionally well to make sure the quality of teaching and children's achievement are as good as possible. They keep a very close eye on how well staff are improving their expertise.
- Parents and carers are overjoyed with how well the school helps their children to learn and to grow in confidence.
- Although staff watch over children's progress effectively, they do not always create detailed targets to help each child improve or check specifically how well they are doing in writing.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day's notice and took place over two days.
- The inspector observed 10 lessons or part lessons. Four were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, the vice-chair and the Chair of the Governing Body, school staff, children, parents and carers, the speech therapist, the pre-school manager and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed children's behaviour and scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures.
- The inspector took account of the 41 responses to the school's questionnaire which were collected in July 2012 and some letters handed to the inspector because there were no responses to the online Parent View survey before or during the inspection.
- The inspector observed the work of the school and looked at documentation including teachers' planning, the school development plan, tracking documentation of children's progress in all the areas of learning, performance management documentation and minutes from meetings held by the governing body.

Inspection team

Jackie Cousins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is larger than most nursery schools.
- Children are taught in a large shared open-plan area with three small classrooms off the main space.
- Most children attend for five part-time sessions each week. A few children attend this school and another pre-school for part of the week.
- The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to the national average.
- No children are known to be eligible for the pupil premium because they are not of the statutory age to receive it.
- The proportion of children who need extra help (either at early years action, early years action plus, or who are undergoing assessment for a statement of special educational needs) is in line with that found in primary schools nationally. There are no comparative figures for nursery schools.
- A few children speak English as an additional language.
- A pre-school and childcare facility and a children's centre are located within the same building as the Nursery. These are subject to separate inspection arrangements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine the way the school checks on children's progress and skills by:
 - making sure that all children's targets are more detailed and that they are looked at carefully by staff every month
 - ensuring that staff keep an even closer watch on the development of children's writing skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children join the Nursery with a very wide range of skills and abilities although the attainment of a significant proportion is lower than that usually found, especially in speaking. When they leave, children's attainment is significantly above expectations in all areas of learning.
- Children make outstanding progress during their time in the Nursery. This is because staff have such a good knowledge of their interests, their strengths and what they need to learn next. The staff work together extremely well to ensure teaching has the maximum impact on children's learning, and discuss at length how to make things even better. Children who speak English as an additional language also make excellent progress.
- Boys and girls do equally well in developing their basic physical, language, social, literacy and mathematical skills because the teaching is so well matched to them as individuals. For instance, more-able children learn to add two numbers together because toy animals are used to make learning fun.
- Teachers, the speech therapist and support staff encourage children to speak clearly as well as look and listen carefully. This means that children make exceptional progress in learning to use language and communicate using sounds and signs. Many children whose speech was underdeveloped when they joined the Nursery catch up and leave with speaking skills which are the same as most children of their age.
- Children work happily together and many concentrate over a considerable period of time. This was seen when they made a snowman and everyone helped gather the snow very productively using spades. They learn to write and make marks confidently because resources such as shaving foam are used creatively.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs receive outstanding support tailored precisely to their requirements, and this ensures that they make the same excellent progress as everyone else. There is no difference in the progress of children known to be eligible for free school meals and the others, because the provision benefits them all equally.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The best teaching begins with individual children's interests. Staff respond extremely flexibly to children's ideas and enable them to support one another in their learning, especially when they choose which activity they will take part in.
- Staff are very highly skilled at working with children to encourage them to find things out for themselves and extend their learning through sensitive and creative questions. They build on children's current knowledge and skills so that they develop a love of learning and inquisitive minds.
- Children keenly take part in adult-led sessions and all staff celebrate their learning to very good effect. For example, in a daily story time session, one child volunteered that the story could start

with, 'One day, there was a mouse...'. The teacher replied, 'Yes, that would be a good beginning to the story.' This encouraged the child and other children to develop a great interest in story telling and reading.

- All the teachers and support staff work in the same way and contribute to providing very memorable learning experiences for the children. For instance, children are learning all about penguins because staff think up creative activities which are used outstandingly well.
- Staff create an exceptionally purposeful atmosphere in the Nursery. This means that there are excellent opportunities for children in all areas of learning both within the classrooms and outside areas. For example, children have been learning about what a builder does. This has been extremely successful because children are able to choose resources and activities for themselves, supported exceptionally well by the staff.
- All staff are involved in checking children's learning and making notes about what they are able to do, particularly through the comprehensive 'Profile' records. These build up a very clear picture of each individual child's progress over their time in the Nursery. Occasionally, children's targets are a little too broad so that not everyone is clear about what type of skills children are working towards.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The staff have established a very happy atmosphere in which children feel safe and secure because they have set such clear boundaries for the children. All children know exactly what is expected of them and so they treat others with respect.
- Children come to the Nursery regularly and very enthusiastically start activities as soon as they arrive. The children new to the Nursery are already clear about everyday routines and understand about sharing equipment. Children become independent because they have easy access to a wide range of attractive and stimulating resources.
- The school keeps very thorough records of any behavioural incidents and works extremely effectively with children and their families when these rare events occur. This ensures children understand quickly why certain behaviours are unacceptable. Staff are highly skilled at managing children and take a very positive approach to helping them make good choices.
- Children have many opportunities to develop their social skills and make friends. For example, they sit down for snack time together and learn to eat and drink healthily at the same time as learning to share. Children learn to be fair to others because resources such as timers are used exceptionally effectively.
- Children take small risks and work out how to make themselves and others safer, for example, they learned how to use tools very safely when they stapled and stuck materials together to make a variety of models including a space ship.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The search for excellence is central to the school's work and senior leaders set an outstanding example as they share their ideas for the school and inspire all staff to be part of 'The Rye Park family'. Staff say that the headteacher's leadership is 'very strong and really motivates' them. Teachers take inspiration from visiting other schools and from training sessions, then make use of the most creative ideas in the Nursery.
- All members of staff feel highly valued and make a full contribution to children's outstanding progress. They have a real passion for the education and welfare of the children in their care. Information is thoughtfully shared about children who attend this Nursery school and the pre-schools which a few children attend for some of the time. The school works very successfully with other professionals and so children often benefit from specialists' knowledge.
- Excellent links through the on-site children's centre ensure the staff know families extremely well. In many cases, they have known the children since they were babies. Children moving to the Nursery from other childcare settings are very familiar with the facilities and staff, because they visit them a lot before they start at the Nursery.
- Leaders and managers at all levels are extremely effective and the school has very thorough systems for evaluating what works well and what is less successful. The use of training to improve teaching and provision is a particular strength, as staff share best practice and hold one another to account. For example, recent training courses have successfully developed staff skills in story telling and allowed many staff to gain extra qualifications.
- The school's development plan is concise and clear. It is a manageable working document that highlights appropriate areas for development. Senior leaders and governors keep a very close check on the Nursery's progress in achieving its goals and are constantly challenging themselves to do even better.
- The staff keep a very close check on children's progress. The headteacher is working with the local authority to develop an even better system to measure how much progress children make. The new system includes checks on most areas of learning but it does not allow senior staff to see separately how well children are learning in writing. The school is already considering how it could do this.
- The school works in partnership with parents and carers extremely well and encourages them to be fully involved in their children's development. The staff use children's 'Profile' records as a tool to discuss with parents and carers how well each child is doing at least once a term. One parent summed up others' thoughts by saying, 'Staff treat our children like they are their own and create a safe, warm and welcoming place.'
- Many activities are planned which promote high levels of achievement, independence and resilience among the children. For example, children learn to use the most up-to-date information and communication technology and have used this to create very imaginative pictures of people.
- Leaders and staff ensure that children very quickly settle into school life. This means that children from all backgrounds have many opportunities to play cooperatively together. Many projects allow them to learn very successfully about different people's cultures in this country and abroad as well as to wonder at the world around them.
- The local authority keeps in regular touch with the school and provides high quality challenge and support, as well as using the school as a centre of excellence.

■ The governance of the school:

- **The governing body fulfils its duties exceptionally well.** It ensures that the school is a safe environment and that staff are appropriately checked and trained in child protection matters. **The vice-chair and Chair of the Governing Body are particularly influential in making decisions.** Governors complete training courses which enable them to hold the school to account extremely well. They check the quality of teaching by asking questions about assessment data which senior leaders present. Governors have a very good understanding of data and a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness. Governors make sure that decisions about how money is spent are wise ones that give value for money. They decide whether teachers and staff should be rewarded with salary increases and work with the local authority to set and review targets for the headteacher.

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	117072
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401643

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	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Harvey
Headteacher	Kim Frazer
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2010
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