

St Mary's Community Nursery School

Old Wrexham Road, Handbridge, Chester, CH4 7HS

Inspection dates 22–23 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher's drive and commitment to ensure high quality provision is effectively shared with staff and governors. As a result, the school has maintained its outstanding effectiveness since the previous inspection.
- There has been no complacency. The outstanding quality of teaching has been sustained through strong performance management systems which ensure teaching continues to develop and improve.
- The nursery provides an extremely harmonious learning environment in which all children are valued as individuals and all groups of children achieve highly.
- The nursery continues to improve. Changes to the indoor area and to ways of checking how much progress children are making have further enhanced its quality. Although information gathered about children's progress is used exceptionally well to plan activities and learning, it is not always used to show how well different groups of children achieve.
- Staff have high expectations for children's behaviour and their learning. As a result, children behave exceptionally well. They share equipment, happily take turns and come to school each day full of enthusiasm and ready to learn.
- Children feel very safe and secure in this extremely warm and caring nursery. They settle quickly and rapidly become confident learners.
- Children make excellent progress in all areas of learning. They learn to listen intently to teachers' questions, for instance, about the number of 'cakes' they have made and how many more are needed to make ten. They make good progress in learning to use the letters of the alphabet and can write their names on a tag to identify their teddy bear.
- Governors provide a high level of support to the headteacher and challenge the school to ensure the high quality of provision is sustained.
- Excellent strategies are in place for engaging with parents who speak very highly of the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a range of sessions and part sessions, two of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher and other staff. A telephone meeting was held with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the nursery's information on children's current progress, planning and checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- The inspector took account of the 18 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), and spoke to several parents during the inspection. The responses from staff to the inspection questionnaires were also considered.

Inspection team

Elaine White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized nursery school. Children attend part time, for either morning or afternoon sessions. The school offers care for children before the start of the morning session, at lunch time and at the end of the afternoon session in the form of Early Bird, Lunch and Tea Timers Clubs.
- The school is situated on the same site as Overleigh St Mary's Church of England Primary School, The Catholic High School and West Cheshire College of Further Education. These settings are subject to separate inspections and reports of their quality can be found on the Ofsted website.
- The majority of children are of White British heritage. A small number of children are learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs supported through early years action is below average. The proportion of children supported through early year action plus is below average. There are no children on roll with a statement of educational needs.
- The nursery shares good practice with other nursery schools in the area.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further refine the use of information about children's progress so that leaders, staff and governors have an even more accurate picture of how well different groups of children achieve.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The passion for excellence and considerable experience of the headteacher, well supported by a highly committed staff team, have ensured that the school's high performance has been sustained. Staff, governors and the headteacher share a drive for further improvement. They report that they 'never sit still', as there is always a way to improve.
- The quality of teaching has remained high, with positive impact on children's excellent achievement. The indoor environment has been improved to further develop children's independence skills. Staff have undertaken training to enhance their expertise in developing children's emotional well-being and involvement and have begun to apply this to their teaching.
- The school's own evaluation of its work and plans for further improvement demonstrate that leaders very accurately assess the strengths of the nursery.
- Improvements have been made to the checks carried out on how well children are learning and the progress they are making, which means that staff have an extremely accurate view of how well individual children are progressing. However, information about children's progress is not always used effectively enough to show how well different groups of children achieve, and so give the most accurate possible picture of children's achievement.
- Children benefit from a broad and exciting curriculum which is related closely to their needs and interests. This promotes children's motivation and high level of engagement in their learning. Children's learning about dance, cultural and religious festivals and other countries such as Africa, broadens their understanding of other backgrounds and cultures. This helps to prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Parents highly praise the work of the school. They are very happy with their children's progress and feel well informed about their time at nursery. Reports sent home to parents are of a high quality and clearly show the gains children have made.
- Children are exceptionally well cared for and the school staff make sure that safeguarding procedures are followed rigorously to meet statutory requirements.
- All children are included in all aspects of provision at the nursery. The school's ethos of warm relationships, politeness, tolerance and respect for others means that all children have equal opportunity to succeed.
- The local authority gives light touch support to this successful school in providing training opportunities for staff.
- **The governance of the school:**

Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and provide a high level of support to the headteacher. The governing body has a broad range of skills and experience to bring to their role. They provide challenge by asking searching questions about any proposed changes and how well the nursery is performing. They ensure that funding is used for maximum benefit. Governors have a clear understanding of performance management and how good teaching is rewarded. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met in order to make sure staff and children are kept safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. Children take great delight in the activities provided and have very positive attitudes to their learning.
- Children have highly positive relationships with staff and each other. They make excellent progress in learning to co-operate with others and share games. In imaginative play children happily decide who is going to play which role as they act out a familiar story.
- Staff have high expectations for children's behaviour. The routines of nursery are very well established and this helps children to feel secure and confident. Children learn to manage their feelings and behaviour as they adapt to a change in their routine and wait patiently for their turn at snack time.
- Children are happy and secure in the nursery's lunch club and other care provision. They behave extremely well in the familiar environment and respond positively to staff's caring approach.

Safety

- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding.
- Children show strong sense of security in nursery. They feel safe in staff's care and show a high level of confidence in moving around the nursery and using equipment. They are quick to remind each other there is 'no running' indoors.
- Children learn to manage risk as they climb confidently in the outdoor area and transport differently sized rocks from one place to another.
- Parents report that they have every confidence that the school keeps their children safe. Attendance is good and parents report that their children are always eager to come to nursery.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching over time is outstanding and never less than good. All adults have high expectations and are passionate about helping children make the best possible progress.
- Staff have an excellent knowledge of how children learn. They use their knowledge of children's skill levels and interests to provide activities which are interesting and relevant. Children's interest in stories about bears, for example, was used to develop their skills in acting out the stories, building different sized houses for the bears, and taking part in a 'teddy bears picnic' snack time.
- Staff's calm, positive approach promotes children's rapid progress in developing confidence and self-esteem. Children feel valued as staff listen carefully to their contributions and respond sensitively to them.
- Children are questioned very well to encourage them to think and extend their learning. For instance, children who were told to take three teddy bear crisps at snack time at first, and then given the opportunity to have two more, were asked to calculate how many they had taken altogether.
- Staff carefully assess children's skill levels on entry to nursery, and provide high quality support for those who are identified as needing extra help. As a result, children achieve extremely well in their speaking and language skills.
- Staff involve themselves very well in children's self-chosen play to develop learning. Children are challenged to develop skills using hoops and balls outdoors, and to be imaginative as they decide to go on a 'bear hunt'.
- Staff work extremely well to encourage a keen interest in books and stories. Stories are used to capture children's interest and imagination, and they enjoy looking at books independently or 'reading' them to others in role play.
- Staff promote children's early writing skills very well through providing many chances for children to make marks and write their names. Children enjoyed labelling the teddy bears they had brought from home by writing their name on a tag. They enjoy freely writing in the outdoor area using chalks, paintbrushes and water.
- Staff reinforce the sounds that letters make in well-planned daily activities so that children learn them and quickly begin to recognise the letter sounds that make up their name. Staff develop this learning effectively over time so that children learn to put letters together to make simple words when they read and write.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children start nursery with a variety of skills and abilities. Some children begin with weaker skills in their language development. Children make sustained progress and achieve extremely well in all areas of learning. They leave nursery very well prepared for the reception class in their next school.
- All groups of children achieve highly. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs are extremely well supported and included. A high level of attention is paid to meeting their needs and ensuring that they are supported to take part in activities. As a result, they make excellent progress in their learning.
- The most able children achieve well as staff work skilfully to extend their learning through well-judged questioning. They show excellent progress as they happily sing number rhymes independently, count how many 'cakes' they have made out of play dough, knowing they need to make 'one more' to make ten.
- Children develop extremely good personal and social skills as they form positive relationships with staff and each other, take turns in games, co-operate in play and learn to be polite.

- Children demonstrate their high level of progress in speaking and communication skills as they speak in complete sentences and describe the 'enormous' house they are building from play bricks. They listen intently to instructions, and respond very well in a small group activity where they correctly identify different musical instruments hidden from view.
- Children new to English also make rapid progress because adults effectively show through their own speech the language what words should be used. They engage children in conversation and develop language through songs and rhymes. As a result, these children show increasing confidence in their speaking skills.
- Children make excellent progress in physical skills as they climb and balance on outdoor equipment and use wheeled toys, balls and hoops. They were very curious, excited and dexterous, for example, as they explored how to make hoops roll faster down the hill.

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	110955
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	448121

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Roe
Headteacher	Ken Jones
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2012
Telephone number	01244 981222
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	head@stmarysnursery.cheshire.sch.uk

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