

# Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School

Sandy Lane, Orford, Warrington, Cheshire, WA2 9HY

**Inspection dates** 21–22 November 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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.

- The school continues to be outstanding and has improved since the previous inspection by becoming a Forest school with its own woodland next to the outdoor play area.
- Children are very keen to come to school. They have excellent opportunities to learn and develop their skills indoors and outdoors.
- They settle in extremely quickly and make rapid progress in the short time they are at the school.
- They are very safe and extremely well looked after. The behaviour of the great majority of children is excellent. Some children have additional behavioural difficulties and they are very well cared for.
- Teaching and learning are excellent. All staff have outstanding expertise to help the children to blossom.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make outstanding progress thanks to the high quality of care and education they receive.
- Leadership, management and governance are outstanding. The leadership team continually searches for ever-improving ways to help the children's development. For example, senior leaders are beginning to look at ways to include places for two-year-olds at the school.
- Partnerships with the Children's Centre, private nursery and other agencies on site are excellent, as are links with parents and off-site agencies and schools. These links benefit the children's well-being and learning exceptionally well.
- The leadership team and staff are at the forefront of excellence in Early Years education and special educational needs in the local authority.
- They provide vital expertise and training for staff from many schools and colleges in the locality.
- In addition, one senior leader makes an excellent contribution by co-ordinating provision in the borough for disabled children and those with special educational needs aged 0–5 years.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed ten sessions in the mainstream class and the specially resourced class, looked at children's work during lessons, spoke with children and shared time with them looking at books.
- He held meetings with staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- He observed the school's work and looked at documents relating to safeguarding, children's progress and attainment, and the way in which the school evaluates its own performance and plans for improvement.
- There were insufficient responses from Parent View, the on-line questionnaire, to register. However, the inspector spoke to many parents as they arrived at school and took account of 59 responses to the school's questionnaire, which was administered in confidence during the inspection and which used the same questions as in Parent View.
- Most members of staff completed the voluntary staff questionnaire and the responses were taken into account.

## Inspection team

Frank Carruthers, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is just above the average size of most nursery schools. It shares a purpose-built site with a Children's Centre, a privately run nursery and other agencies, such as health specialists and occupational therapists, at a Child Development Centre. These facilities are subject to separate inspections.
- Children are of predominantly White British heritage. A few are from minority ethnic backgrounds, some of whom speak home languages other than English, mainly Polish.
- Children attend part-time for up to 15 hours per week.
- The school has specialist provision for up to 24 disabled children and those with special educational needs. Children have a range of special educational needs, some with multiple disabilities. As a result, the proportion of children with additional needs and statements of special educational needs is high compared with that of most nursery schools.
- The school provides an outreach service for young children aged 0–5 years who are in different settings in the borough and are disabled or have special educational needs.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has gained the status of Forest School.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop further the provision for two-year-old children by:
  - completing training to allow staff to research best practice and establish the expertise and resources necessary to teach two-year-olds
  - producing an action plan for the school to be ready to admit two-year-olds in line with the expansion of the government's funding for places.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Most children start school with skills that are well below those typically expected for their age, especially in communication and language. Some children in the specialist resource, The Rainbow Room, have multiple disabilities and special educational needs.
- All children make outstanding progress. By the time they move on to Reception classes in primary schools, the great majority is achieving at the level expected of children at that stage.
- The overwhelming majority of parents is thrilled at the way their child blossoms.
- Children in the mainstream class, The Garden Room, are curious and thoroughly enjoy investigating all manner of things in school. Outdoors, they enjoyed finding out about water pressure as they filled different syringes and then squirted the water high into the air.
- They became absorbed at the hairdressing salon, as receptionists, taking phone calls and making appointments, and as hairdressers and beauticians, combing and spraying customers' hair, using clips and dryers.
- The children, even at this early stage of the school year, display excellent levels of concentration. They play happily with one another and share toys and equipment with little fuss.
- Photographic evidence shows just how much progress they make during the school year. When the school entered a gardening competition for schools last summer, the children planned and built a model of their school play areas and wrote signs and labels for it. They grew grass from seed and used sand and pebbles to resemble the layout.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs do exceptionally well.
- They settle into school routines and enjoy using the sensory rooms, such as The Lighthouse, to help them feel happy and secure.
- They become ever more skilful at jumping, balancing and dancing in the Play Court. They have great opportunities to run and be mobile outdoors, playing in water and sand areas, and using climbing frames. They happily explore the woodland with its dens and ditches.
- The children benefit from the many times each day when they work and play alongside children from The Garden Room. They visit each other's rooms and often play outdoors together.
- They enjoy quiet times sharing books with adults and playing with puppets in the library in the Children's centre, called The Isle of Books.
- They go out in the community in their six-seater 'bus' and thoroughly enjoy visiting a nearby café and school, meeting people and looking at the traffic.
- All these activities help the children exceptionally well to develop friendships and to learn about life around them.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The range of expertise among staff to help children's learning is exceptional. Various staff have been trained to teach skills, for example of communication, such as signing and storytelling, and these skills are passed to all staff.
- As a result, children are seen signing to adults and other children, for example Polish-speaking children.
- They thoroughly enjoy storytelling through Chatterboxes, especially when they take them home and create their own stories.
- They are absorbed in Story Time when they create a new story each day from bags with different pictures in them (this is called Boxing Clever).
- All staff act as key workers for individual children. This means they take a close interest in the development of the children in their care and have a close understanding of just how well each child is doing.

- The staff make very strong links with parents. They regularly watch the children at work and play and record the progress they make using photographs and notes exceptionally well.
- These form the children's Learning Journey booklets, which are available every day for parents to see and take home to share with relatives and friends. Parents report that they really enjoy these diaries.
- Through songs and rhymes and regular opportunities to count and recognise shapes, the staff encourage all the children to understand number.
- The project to establish the school as a Forest school is proving a great success.
- The staff provide the children with great opportunities to enjoy and explore the woodland, which must seem to them a real forest, and to plan and solve problems there.
- For example, they make decisions about building dens and what they need. They have to devise ways to cross a muddy ditch and not fall in. If they do fall in, how do they get back up the slippery bank?
- The expertise of staff in The Rainbow Room to care for and teach disabled children and those with special educational needs is excellent.
- The staff know how to keep children happy, calm and engaged in learning. They have the full confidence of parents. They make excellent use of other specialist services, such as speech therapists, to help the children do well.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Children attend school regularly and several parents reported to the inspector how keen they are to come.
- Thanks to a programme of visits and events in school and in the Children's Centre before they start school, called Ready, Steady, Nursery, parents and their children are at greater ease when they start.
- The children settle quickly and by the time of the inspection, there was no evidence of children wanting to cling to a parent. Rather, they are keen to find their name, sign in and start the session.
- Because of the rich variety of things to do, the children are quickly absorbed in play and they behave exceptionally well. There are few problems between children. Even this early in the school year, the children were seen playing together happily and working things out in groups.
- Bullying is not a concern for parents. Staff deal with the few difficult moments between children exceptionally well.
- Children get to know how to stay safe. This was evident when a group went off with adults to the forest. On reaching the outdoor classroom, they were asked to say what they had to remember so that they stayed safe, for example, not to put anything they find in their mouths.
- They learn about personal hygiene and how to go to the toilet independently.
- All aspects of safety and security on site and when they leave the site are fully dealt with by the staff.
- The well-being of children is of high priority to all staff. The school has outstanding links with other agencies and specialists, such as health visitors, nurses, care workers and occupational therapists, to help the children to blossom.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The headteacher and her senior leadership team have outstanding skills and experience for the job. Together they oversee all elements of the school, including the outreach service for young children with special educational needs in other settings.
- Staff are always looking to improve how they work and how effective they are. Many successful projects have been introduced and they are now beginning to look forward to making places

available for children younger than three years old.

- The school's procedures for gaining an accurate picture of its performance are excellent. An example of this is the way they check on how much progress the children are making.
- The assistant headteacher has followed through the progress of Sandy Lane children into Reception classes in primary schools and has evaluated their performance at the end of the Reception year. This shows that each year since she began this check, Sandy Lane children have outperformed other children overall.
- In addition, if any areas of comparative weakness are identified, for example one year in children's ability to recognise familiar shapes such as squares and triangles, then the school swiftly acts upon these findings.
- This is a school that meets the needs of all children and provides them with outstanding experiences to help them to learn and do well in primary school. As a result, children make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- All aspects of safeguarding the children's welfare and the safe recruitment of staff are strong.
- Staff who responded to the questionnaire reported that they have very good opportunities to help them improve their skills of teaching and caring for children. Such training is put to good use both in school and beyond.
- Systems to check the quality of teaching and arrangements to manage the performance of staff are excellent and lead to the outstanding teaching seen in school.
- The staff are highly regarded by the local authority, which has provided effective, light-touch support for the school. Staff have taught staff from other schools and settings on a wide range of topics, including communication skills, special educational needs and the requirements for becoming a Forest school.
- In addition, the school is considered a model of best practice and is host to many visiting headteachers, teachers and specialists, keen to follow its example. It is described by one local authority officer as the borough's 'flagship school' for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body makes an excellent contribution to the work of the school. The Chair of the Governing Body has been at the centre of past projects that make the school as vibrant a place as it is. Members of the governing body gain an excellent understanding of how well the school is doing. They have the opportunity to question staff and find out about all elements of the school. They challenge senior staff very well. Several members have excellent expertise, for example, in Early Years education, special educational needs, health and safety and in finance, to support the school.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110956
<b>Local authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	401162

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	114
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Maureen Banner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lindsay Bray
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 April 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 623640
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