

Crook Nursery School

Croft Avenue, Crook, County Durham, DL15 8QG

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

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 progress in their learning and development in all areas of the curriculum. Those with speech, language and communication difficulties and with special educational needs make outstanding progress.
- Teaching is good. Some is outstanding, particularly when adults are supporting children's developing communication skills.
- Children are exceptionally well cared for and nurtured. They feel extremely safe and respond very well to adults, who are very good role models. Consequently, behaviour is excellent.
- The curriculum is well adapted to cater for individual children's abilities and interests. The range of resources outdoors offers countless opportunities for children to explore and develop their imagination.
- The staff team work extremely well together and are dedicated to doing their best for all children. They are ably led by the headteacher and governors who have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and this is helping the school to improve.
- Partnerships with parents are excellent and the close relationship which is developed helps to ensure children make good or better progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Few children exceed levels of development which is typical for their age because the progress made by children capable of achieving more highly is more inconsistent.
- Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to extend children's knowledge and understanding in their questioning and in the resources they provide.
- Sometimes, opportunities for children to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills are missed.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a number of extended sessions in the nursery both indoors and outdoors and in the morning and afternoon sessions.
- Discussions were held with all members of staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 13 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View); the school's own consultations with parents and spoke to a group of parents informally. She also took into account a letter from a nearby childminder who has worked with the school.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's own data on children's progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents relating to safeguarding, records of children's work and of the curriculum the school offers children. She also took account of a survey completed by staff.

Inspection team

Susan Waugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school serves the immediate area and neighbouring villages.
- The vast majority of children join the school the term after their third birthday although a small number begin immediately after their third birthday. Most transfer to the primary school located on the same site.
- It is an average-sized nursery school.
- Nearly all children are of White British heritage.
- At the time of the inspection, 10 children needed extra help with their learning and development and were supported at early years action or early years action plus. There were no disabled children.
- The school provides additional 'wrap-around' care over lunchtime for the 26 children who attend on blocked sessions for two and a half days a week. All other children attend for morning or afternoon sessions.
- The headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and increase rates of progress, particularly for more-able children, by:
 - more frequently using questioning to increase opportunities for children to solve problems
 - always ensuring that resources in all areas of the nursery extend children's thinking and knowledge
 - further enhancing opportunities for children to use their developing reading, writing and mathematical skills
 - having a more systematic approach to planning, assessing and recording children's individual achievements so that children's next steps in learning can be addressed even more rapidly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- A large majority of children begin nursery with levels of development which are below those typically expected.
- Good progress is made in all areas of the curriculum so that by the time they leave school they have reached levels of development which are typical for their age. For example, they act out scenarios in the hospital role play, using a stethoscope to listen to their hearts and care for the patients.
- Children settle well into nursery. Even children who are new to school quickly learn routines and make careful choices about what to play with. They learn to concentrate and become absorbed in a task for increasing periods of time.
- Physical skills are well developed particularly in the outdoor area with its interesting features such as the 'ruined castle' and varied terrain. There are steep slopes to climb a muddy bog to wade through and long grass to negotiate.
- Children's communication skills are developed rapidly as a result of very good support from adults. Children with more complex speech difficulties, who have a special educational need, make excellent progress as a result of the close attention and support they receive. Other children with special educational needs also make very rapid progress in their learning and development.
- Typically, boys and girls make the same rates of progress. This demonstrates leaders' commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity because they effectively cater for individual interests and needs.
- Good progress is made in developing children's reading skills. An enjoyable story time ends each session. Adults read with enthusiasm and expression and children learn about the 'title' and 'blurb' and join in when they can.
- Mathematical skills are developed well. Children use balances to find heavier and lighter objects and there are a number of opportunities to count throughout the day.
- Few children reach levels of learning and development which are above those typical for their age. This is because children who have the ability to achieve more highly are not always challenged to extend their learning as much as they should.

The quality of teaching is good

- Children are fully engaged and absorbed in what they do because adults observe them carefully and make sure that they offer a range of interesting activities which develop children's learning and independence. For example, adults observed that a group of children were trying to build walls with the stones in the sand area so the next day children found more stones and trowels available to extend their play.
- Adults are particularly skilled at developing children's communication skills. Their effortless, but well-thought-out conversations ensure that children quickly develop a wider vocabulary and speak in longer and more complex sentences.
- Adults develop children's basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics well but opportunities to develop them further and to a higher level are sometimes missed. Writing equipment is not available in all areas of the nursery and some resources are not labelled so children are not encouraged to read for a purpose.
- The outdoor space is particularly well thought out with resources having a variety of uses which help to develop children's imagination. Adults respond to children's spontaneous interests effectively. For example, when a spider was found in the tent, the adult used this as an opportunity to support children to learn about the number of legs a spider has and the habitat it lives in.

- The indoor space is carefully and purposefully organised to entice children to play and explore. For example, the resources to create models and pictures are easily accessible and children can see the full range of objects available. However, not all areas are equally well resourced so that they do not extend and develop children's learning further.
- Questions are used effectively to develop children's learning and extend their knowledge but sometimes opportunities to develop children's thinking through offering problems to solve are missed, particularly when children are capable of achieving more highly.
- Adults observe children carefully day-to-day in order to inform them about what to do next to help children progress. However, this information is not systematically shared across the team so that adults may not always be aware of how they can support a child to make more rapid progress.
- Recently, longer-term records of children's achievements have become more detailed so adults can track individual children's progress over time and check whether progress is slowing down and needs to speed up in some areas of the curriculum. This newly introduced system is not yet at a stage of making a difference to the rates of progress children make.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Parents have confidence in the school. They appreciate the welcoming family atmosphere and believe that their children are safe and that behaviour is excellent.
- Behaviour in the nursery is consistently outstanding. There is a quiet hum of activity as children become absorbed in what they are doing. The very few children who find behaving well difficult are supported by sensitive but firm adults to overcome difficulties.
- All adults in the school care deeply and are dedicated to ensuring that children thrive. They are warm and welcoming and nurture the children very well. They have excellent relationships with the children and their families and as a result, children respond well to them and they feel safe and secure.
- Each child has a special person who knows them best and who is responsible for keeping in touch with their family. This contributes to the feeling of safety and security.
- Nearly all children come to school each day, eager to play with friends and find out what new and exciting things they are doing. Because adults make sure that the activities on offer interest the children they want to be involved and are keen to learn.
- Children play well together, supported by adults who act as very good role models. They are very respectful to the children, always being kind and courteous. Children are thanked for their efforts at the end of each group time.
- Children learn to share and to help each other when the need arises. One girl got stuck in the muddy bog and lost a boot. Another girl immediately struggled into the mud to retrieve the boot for her stranded friend.
- The outdoor space in particular allows children to take sensible risks and to learn the boundaries for keeping themselves safe such as when they are negotiating a steep slope or jumping from a wall. They learn to use knives carefully when cutting vegetables to make soup and take care not to go near the stove when the soup is cooking. They know that the steam rising indicates that the soup is hot.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's sensitive, perceptive leadership and ambition is supported by the staff team. All are working strongly to maintain the school's values and aims and they have a very accurate view of what they do well and what could be improved further. As a result, they have the right priorities to ensure the quality of education provided for the children is as effective as possible. Plans to develop the nursery further are well thought out and manageable.
- Leaders are clearly focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Daily informal

meetings combine with more formal opportunities to check the performance of adults. This, along with a regular programme of training and individual professional development, ensures that the quality of teaching is being enhanced.

- Having a strong and close partnership with parents is a priority. Families are visited at home before a child begins nursery and the basis of the excellent relationship which develops is the daily meeting and greeting with the special person. This is complemented by a series of regular family events such as a visit to the pantomime and opportunities for parents to find out about how their child is supported to learn.
- Children are offered a wide range of opportunities, based on their interests, both indoors and outdoors to learn and develop in all areas of the curriculum. Their learning is enriched by visits to the woods to explore, by visitors such as firefighters and musicians and by their own imagination making use of the open-ended resources adults have provided for them.
- Safeguarding requirements are met and checked regularly.
- The local authority provides light touch support for the school. The school values the support, guidance and advice provided.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good knowledge of the school, based on regular visits, use of their own professional expertise and information from the headteacher. As a result, the governing body is able to offer appropriate support, to challenge where it is necessary and to make well-informed decisions about using school funds. Members are fully committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all children, and they are aware that children who are more able do not do as well as they could so they have rightly prioritised this for development and as an area for improving the performance of staff.

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	113984
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	425726

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Tomlinson
Headteacher	Julia Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2010
Telephone number	01388 763280
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