

Rockwood Nursery School

Kingsland Road, Burnley, Lancashire, BB11 3PU

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2014

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------|
| | 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

- 'Rockwood is a wonderful school where every child is known and valued' is a comment made by several parents. Partnerships with parents are excellent, resulting in children's smooth transition from home to school.
- The headteacher's high ambition and passion inspires the whole staff team and this has helped to drive up standards and improve the quality of teaching.
- Skilled governors provide challenge and support in just the right proportions. They are extremely well informed about the school's performance.
- Children achieve exceptionally well and make outstanding progress in all areas of development, regardless of their starting points. Their high achievement prepares them very well for learning in a Reception class.
- Teaching is outstanding because staff are accomplished and reflective professionals. They are keen to improve their skills through the sharing of expertise and completing relevant training.
- Staff know precisely what every child is capable of. They use this knowledge exceptionally well to plan activities that are just at the right level for each child or group. Every child has an equal opportunity to achieve their best.
- Children's behaviour is outstanding. They follow routines sensibly, run into school eagerly and have excellent attitudes to learning.
- The school promotes children's excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are many opportunities for children to experience a sense of wonder and excitement, especially outdoors.
- High quality care and support ensures that children are kept exceptionally safe and secure. Children are very well taught to recognise risk and danger.
- The wide range of interesting activities grabs the imagination of children as they play in the very well resourced indoor and outdoor areas. Occasionally, opportunities are missed for children to practise their reading skills when they are learning outdoors and this affects their overall achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning and teaching in four nursery sessions and spoke with children. Some teaching was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, three other governors, the leadership team, other staff and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents, including school records of the quality of teaching, records of teacher targets, data about children's progress, the school's checks on its performance and the school development plans.
- The inspector took account of the 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), an email from a parent and the views of parents bringing their children to school.
- Questionnaire responses from nine members of staff were considered.

Inspection team

Michael Hewlett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized nursery school. The majority of children attend for three hours each morning or afternoon, although flexible provision is available for those families who choose it.
- Most children attend nursery from the term after their third birthday until transferring to Reception classes in local primary schools.
- The large majority of children are of White British heritage, although an increasing number of children come from a range of minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of children who receive extra help from school staff because they have been identified as having special educational needs (school action) is above average.
- The proportion of children who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- There is a separately registered playgroup on site, Teddy's Playgroup, whose three and four-year olds and staff frequently spend time in the classrooms with school children. The playgroup was not part of this inspection. A separate report is available on the Ofsted website.
- The school is part of a cluster of five nursery schools that work together and share training events.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve children's achievement in reading by providing more opportunities for children to practise their reading skills when they are learning outside.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Pivotal to the school's successes and children's outstanding achievement is the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. She is exceptionally well supported by other leaders, staff and governors. Within the school there is a relentless focus on improving the provision still further.
- Working closely together, school leaders have established a positive climate of high expectations which enable children to learn and behave exceptionally well. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated.
- Despite the high standards achieved, there is no sense of complacency. Such determination has led to the improvements in teaching seen since the last inspection to such an extent that outstanding teaching and learning are now the norm.
- The strong staff team, in which middle leaders are very effective in leading in their areas of responsibility, maintain an extremely close check on the quality of learning experiences for each child. Progress for each child is rigorously checked as is their behaviour and attendance. Regular staff reflection time ensures that children's learning is constantly enriched and supplemented. Any variances in the achievement of individual children are quickly identified and addressed. Judgements of the school's performance are accurate because all checks are robust and precise.
- Excellent home-school links ensure that parents are actively involved in their children's development. Home visits made by staff are valued by parents with comments such as, 'they really take every opportunity to get to know our children well which makes their start at school easy', are typical of the views expressed.
- The curriculum is rich, vibrant and interweaves many opportunities to enhance children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development with other skills. 'It's amazing', is how one parent described the curriculum and children are regularly consulted about what they would like to learn.
- An excellent range of visits and visitors adds greatly to children's overall experience. It ensures that specialist knowledge and the local community are used very effectively to develop children's skills. For example, children regularly visit the nearby Towneley Park and confidently discuss with adults how they would like to see it improved. Children are beginning to understand how their views can affect what happens in their local community.
- An excellent partnership is in place with the local authority and this has led to improvements in the provision for children. For example, the school's review of mathematical learning was undertaken jointly with a local authority officer. The school is highly regarded within the local authority, which encourages the school to share its expertise with others.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust, regularly reviewed and meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an excellent overview of the school's work. Governors know how well the school is doing because they have detailed information from the headteacher, and they support and challenge leaders in just the right proportions. As a result, they are influential in making key decisions and in asking demanding questions. Governors are well trained and are clear about how well the school is performing in relation to similar schools. They understand the teacher appraisal process and are actively involved in ensuring that pay progression is securely linked to the quality of teaching. Rigorous systems are in place to set and review targets for the headteacher. Governors ensure that finances are used effectively to secure further improvements and that all statutory requirements are met, including arrangements to keep children safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. School records, views expressed in the online parent questionnaire and informal discussions with parents confirm this view. No child has been prevented from attending the school because of poor behaviour.
- Parents and their children are welcomed warmly by staff at the beginning and end of each session. Parents often stay and talk informally to staff and help their child to settle. This secures a very positive and productive start to each session.
- Throughout the school, children demonstrate a thirst for learning and a determination to complete a task once they have started it. This helps to explain why children's achievement is outstanding.
- Children flourish in the warm, friendly and exceptionally happy school atmosphere. They quickly become

confident and self-assured. Children develop excellent self-control and this is illustrated at snack time where children swiftly settle on their chairs and are extremely attentive. They listen attentively, confidently ask questions and are happy to share the food with their friends.

- Children rarely shout out answers or interrupt their classmates. They are well-mannered and polite reflecting the high standards that staff set for them.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. At all times the children's physical well-being is given the highest priority. The excellent outdoor area provides an impressive range of challenging activities for climbing, balancing and crawling through tunnels, all within a natural woodland environment. Children judge risk confidently when they are tackling these challenges.
- There are no recorded incidents of bullying or racism. Children say they feel safe and secure and their parents agree. Many parents were very keen to give their views about the school during the inspection. They were overwhelmingly positive, with many saying the school was like a 'big family' as reflected by one parent who said, 'The staff treat the children as if they were their own.'
- Attendance is good and parents are quick to point out how much their children enjoy coming to school each day. 'My son would come at the weekend if he had the chance', was typical of the comments made.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching and learning are outstanding because staff have very high expectations of each child's level of attainment and ensure they all make excellent progress and achieve highly. In turn, children are keen and eager to do well. At a very early stage, children are successfully taught to take responsibility for organising their own learning.
- Staff plan together and there are on-going checks on the children's progress, which is recorded regularly. These assessments are used effectively to plan work which is suitably challenging for all ability groups. In addition, parents' views on how well their children are learning are incorporated into the records. Consequently, there is a comprehensive picture of every child's achievement and response to their learning.
- School data and the school's checks to gain a view of its performance, together with inspection evidence, confirm that teaching is excellent across all the areas of the curriculum and that this is having a positive impact on children's learning.
- Staff are very skilled at knowing when to step back and give children the time and space to explore for themselves, and when to ask questions to move the learning forward. Excellent questioning is used to help children develop their own ideas further.
- Children enjoy the trust that staff place in them to work out things for themselves and this accelerates children's learning when they tackle new challenges. This was well illustrated by a group of children building a den in the woodland area. Each member adopted a specific role within the 'building team' and cooperated well as they decided how to lift a tarpaulin over the wooden structure. 'If we don't all lift at the same time, it won't work', was one comment that summed up their dilemma. Another counted how many pegs would be needed to secure the 'roof' while a third child was confident that if they ran out of pegs, 'I can use bits of wood'.
- Staff have an outstanding understanding of how young children learn and use this knowledge effectively when planning activities specifically designed to introduce early reading, writing and mathematical skills. As a result, children make rapid progress in all of these areas. Staff are also quick to spot areas where more emphasis might be needed, such as through providing more opportunities in the outside area for children to practise their letter recognition and reading skills.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Most children start school with skills that are below those typical for their age. Children of all abilities make outstanding progress during their time in the school and leave with most working at levels that are typical for their age. Increasing proportions of children exceed these expectations in all the areas of development.
- Gaps in progress between different groups of children are narrowing because the school makes excellent use of data about individual children and groups to check on the impact of teaching. Staff then make the necessary changes to planned activities to ensure that no individuals or groups fall behind.
- The high priority given to improving children's speaking and listening helps to ensure that rapid progress is

made in these areas, often from low starting points. Children want to talk because adults are interested in what they have to say, have time to listen and skilfully guide and prompt them as they search for the right word. For example, a girl struggled to explain why her cycle helmet was not fitting properly. Eventually and after much pointing from the girl and careful questioning from the adult working with her she exclaimed triumphantly, 'Not fit, wrong way'.

- Achievement in reading and writing is excellent, confirmed not only by the school's data and inspection evidence but by children's positive responses to the rich and varied opportunities provided for them. Mark making and drawing feature highly in each classroom and outdoors. Children listen attentively at story time and many are keen to retell their favourite stories. Classrooms are full of attractive books, written displays and signs. These help children begin to make sense of letters and the sounds they make and to practise reading words. Outdoors, these opportunities are not so plentiful and this affects children's overall achievement in reading.
- Children make rapid progress in developing mathematical skills. This progress has accelerated still further recently because improving children's skills in this area became a school priority. Consequently, children are confident in using and applying their knowledge of number and shape in other areas of learning. This was illustrated by children counting out the correct number of plates that they needed during imaginative play and when they were searching for and naming the right shapes as they built a tower using wooden blocks.
- The most able children are given good levels of challenge to extend their learning and move them on to the next levels at the right time. For example, phonics (letters and the sound they make) teaching groups are a regular feature of the school, with some children already linking sounds to letters and beginning to read words.
- Children from minority ethnic groups and those who are bilingual, for whom English is an additional language, make excellent progress during their time at nursery school. This is because the school values the heritage and language of every family, and staff ensure that children are given individual support when they need it to help them learn rapidly.
- Disabled children and children who have special educational needs make similar progress to other children in the school because staff get to know their needs very well, and use this when planning teaching. Staff who work with them show immense dedication, patience and attention in helping them to make small, but often very significant, steps in their learning.
- Parents recognise the excellent progress that their children make at school, for example, saying, 'I'm delighted – they learn so much here. I travel for miles to get her into Rockwood'.

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

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| Unique reference number | 119065 |
| Local authority | Lancashire |
| Inspection number | 447961 |

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

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| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3–5 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 61 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jason Howard |
| Headteacher | Faith Stringer |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 November 2011 |
| Telephone number | 01282 426711 |
| Fax number | 01282 426711 |
| Email address | info@rockwoodnursery.com |

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