

Lark Hill Nursery School

Northgate Road, Edgeley, Stockport, Cheshire, SK3 9PH

Inspection dates 3–4 December 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 and deputy headteacher are inspirational leaders and are exceptionally well supported by a talented and dedicated staff team and governing body who have high expectations for all children.
- School leaders have been highly successful in sustaining overall outstanding achievement and excellent teaching for all children since the last inspection.
- Teaching is outstanding because all staff are skilled in using their knowledge of individual children's development and interests to ensure that they make rapid progress in their learning and acquire skills quickly.
- Children take part in an exceptionally wide range of exciting and stimulating play activities in a very well-resourced indoor and outdoor environment. As a result, they are enthusiastic and self-aware learners who take every opportunity to try new things and approach different activities with resilience and imagination.
- A focus on developing children's communication and language skills as well as their personal, social and emotional development, means that children leave the nursery able to express themselves confidently and work well, both independently and with others.
- The school continues to improve and the majority of children move on to their primary schools with skills that are at least in line with, and sometimes above those expected for their age in almost all areas of learning. They are very well prepared for the next phase in their education.
- The progress that children make is outstanding in almost all areas of learning and never less than good. On occasion, the most-able children could be enabled to make even better progress.
- School leaders have been very effective in their work to raise standards and use assessment information well to monitor the achievement of groups of children.
- Children behave exceptionally well and respond to the high expectations that staff have of them. They are encouraged to be independent and behave respectfully and considerately to all members of the school community.
- Children are very secure in the school and clearly understand how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Senior leaders communicate exceptionally well with parents and as a result, relationships are very positive and parents speak very highly of the nursery and the experiences their children have there.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven sessions or part-lessons, including one which was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with members of staff and members of the governing body. The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The results of the school's latest parental surveys were considered, along with 12 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- During the inspection, a wide range of evidence was scrutinised including: assessment data, the school's evaluation of its work, minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation, reports from school improvement partners, information about the management of teachers' performance, monitoring records and the school's improvement plan.
- The inspector talked with children about their learning and reviewed samples of their work.
- Fourteen responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.
- The inspector observed children's behaviour in their play and around the school.

Inspection team

Clare Daniel, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a large nursery school. The school offers flexible provision so that children may attend either for morning or afternoon sessions or for full days. Parents can add additional sessions on top of their 15-hour entitlement.
- The school is registered to manage provision for eight two-year-old children on the same site. This provision is subject to a separate inspection, the report of which can be found on www.ofsted.gov.uk
- The school shares its site with Lark Hill Primary School and is situated in a building shared with Cheadle Heath and Edgeley Children's Centre. The primary school and children's centre are subject to separate inspection and reports of their quality can be found on the website www.ofsted.gov.uk
- The vast majority of children are of White British heritage, although a growing proportion of children joins the school at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the progress the most-able children already make, so that it always matches the consistently outstanding progress made by other groups of children.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have an exceptional understanding of early years practice and inspire all staff to share their vision of excellence. They are ably supported by a recently appointed school business manager who completes the senior leadership team and who supports the strategic development of the school.
- School leaders have demonstrated a relentless drive for excellence and have been successful in improving the already high levels of achievement since the last inspection. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are highly committed to working with parents to improve outcomes for children at every opportunity. This is not a school which is content to rest on its laurels and take previous high performance for granted.
- The quality of teaching is regularly checked by senior leaders, who ensure that examples of high quality practice are shared amongst all of the staff and also that areas for improvement are precise, well-informed and have a significant impact on the outcomes for children when addressed.
- All staff benefit from an extensive range of training opportunities and are well supported in reviewing their own performance. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher have undertaken further postgraduate study and research into early years practice and this has had a significant impact on the way that children's learning is developed and promoted at the school. As a result, the progress that children make is outstanding.
- Systems to check how well children are doing are highly refined and the performance of all groups of children is tracked and analysed extensively. This means that school leaders can immediately identify any children who might be at risk of falling behind, or any groups of children who may not be progressing as fast as their peers. The progress made by the most-able children is never less than good, but occasionally is not as rapid as it could be, given their capabilities. The school has recognised this and is already working on ways to improve their achievement even further.
- The curriculum is rich with high quality experiences, based on children's interests and highly engaging. During the inspection, all children demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm for learning and parents report that this is usually the case and that children are very keen to attend school every day.
- Children sustain their enthusiasm for themes over several sessions, because they are engrossed in the well-planned activities and experiences that staff provide for them. Staff take every opportunity to engage children in new learning, for example encouraging children to bring in diggers and other mechanical toys in response to the road works taking place directly outside the school at the time of the inspection.
- School leaders have established exceptionally positive relationships with parents, who are unfailingly positive in their view of the education their children receive. A programme of home visits, interviews, regular meetings and well-organised communication ensure that parents are exceptionally well informed about their child's transition into the school, progress and achievement.
- School leaders encourage parents to take an active role in their child's learning through a range of Little Lark Challenges which focus on specific areas of learning and are designed for parents and children to complete together. Parents can also review their children's learning records online and contribute to them using a 'postcard' sent electronically to school. Almost half the parents have chosen to contribute in this way.
- Staff value all children individually and celebrate their differences and similarities effectively. The opportunities that the school provides through a programme of visitors, trips and family events ensure that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well and that their experiences are continually extended beyond their home, school and family life. This all contributes significantly to the school's excellent promotion of equality of opportunity and in preparing children, at an age-appropriate level, for life in modern Britain.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for the school and considers the outcomes for children and the leadership and management to be outstanding.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very knowledgeable about the school's work and its performance. They provide a high level of challenge and support to the headteacher in ensuring that the school maintains its outstanding provision. Governors fully understand the link between pay and performance and also appreciate how the quality of teaching is monitored so that it impacts on the achievement of children. Governors manage the school finances effectively and have overseen the inclusion and imminent expansion of provision for two-year-olds well. They ensure that staff and children are safe by meeting their statutory safeguarding requirements.

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

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. Staff provide an encouraging and nurturing atmosphere where manners, courtesy and respect are highly valued and consistently encouraged.
- Children settle into the school routine quickly and respond very well to all adults with respect, affection and good humour. They build good relationships with their key workers who manage 'group time' activities, but also are confident when approaching a range of staff members if they need support or comfort.
- Staff model positive behaviour to children, including sharing, taking turns and helping one another and as a result, children make rapid progress in learning how to manage their behaviour and express their feelings.
- Children were observed negotiating sensibly with each other when playing in the water tray. They were using a wide range of plastic sea creatures to create a game together and when several children wanted a particular fish, they were able to negotiate taking turns so that they all had a chance to be the 'leader'. When some children had moved away to a different activity, others continued playing the same game until fierce, giant dinosaurs threatened the sea creatures' safety. They called 'Help! Help! Come and rescue your friends!' to the other children, who immediately returned from their activity and joined back in enthusiastically.
- Children are very well motivated and engaged in their activities. Their attitudes to learning are exemplary, as are the levels of independence they demonstrate. They concentrate for extended periods of time and apply themselves well in a wide range of activities.
- Parents unanimously say that the children behave well and the school reports no exclusions, bullying or racist incidents. Nevertheless, the systems in place for managing such incidents, should they occur, are detailed and well thought out.

Safety

- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding.
- Children use equipment very sensibly and staff encourage them to take well-managed risks in the range of activities on offer, for example when climbing, using crates or the rope swing in the outdoor area. This helps children to develop their self-esteem and sense of pride in their accomplishments, especially when they succeed in activities that they might initially have approached with caution.
- Children respond very well to the gong which tells them that it is time to tidy up and return to their groups, taking responsibility for putting equipment away safely and sensibly and working together well.
- Senior leaders work very effectively with other agencies to keep children safe and to support vulnerable families with a range of issues. Their monitoring and record-keeping is of a very high standard and leaders can clearly demonstrate the impact their work has on children's achievement and attendance.
- Parents are confident that their children are safe in nursery and are very keen to get there every day, because they feel secure and enjoy learning. Attendance is good.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding over time and never less than good. Staff create a vibrant and positive environment and foster nurturing relationships with all children. As a result, children feel valued and are confident learners.
- All staff are highly skilled in responding to children's interests and individual needs, and as a result, most groups of children make outstanding progress and demonstrate very high levels of enthusiasm and engagement in their learning.
- Staff ensure that children are challenged in their learning and take every opportunity to develop their communication and language skills through discussion, questioning and role play. Adults carefully judge when to intervene or when to let children's play continue, for example, children were playing independently, setting up a family meal in the role play area. As they set out more places and filled them with toys, they talked to themselves acting as each character around the table. Staff observed and made sure that they had access to enough cups, plates, chairs and cushions to continue their game as long as they chose to.
- Adults ensure that all children have a wide range of opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills,

not only through mathematical activities, but also through their exploration of the natural world and use of technology. Children enjoyed using beads and bands to make shapes and patterns on pegboards, developing their fine motor skills by using tweezers to secure the bands. Staff questioned the children about the shapes they had made and challenged them to describe the shapes using mathematical language, as well as changing them and describing the changes they had made.

- Staff plan opportunities for children to explore mark-making, writing and reading on as many occasions as possible. During the inspection, children had turned the house in the outdoor area into a café serving hot drinks, as the weather had been cold and frosty. They had used chalk to write a menu with prices for different drinks and were serving each other while referring customers to the menu on the board outside.
- The high level of attention staff pay to observing the children's learning means that all adults have a detailed knowledge of the children's interests, skills and progress. Regular discussions between staff and parents ensure that the learning opportunities planned for each child are matched very well to their needs and as a result, they make outstanding progress. However, on occasion, tasks do not fully challenge some of the most-able children to make their best possible progress.
- Support for children with disabilities or special educational needs is highly effective and children work regularly with staff, often individually, to help them to overcome their difficulties and to increase their achievement.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children start in the nursery with skills that vary, but for the large part are below those typical for their age. A small proportion of children enter the nursery with skills that are well below those expected in communication and language and also in their personal, social and emotional development. They make rapid progress and the majority of children move on to primary school very well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- From the time they start at the nursery, to the time they leave, the proportion of children with skills that are above those expected for their age increases significantly. Children make particularly rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development, reading, writing and mathematical skills and as a result, they are confident, enthusiastic and resilient learners who are well prepared to start primary school.
- Senior leaders ensure that all staff are involved in the moderation of assessments and as a result, all staff have a shared view of the strengths and areas for improvement in every child's learning.
- Children make rapid progress in their speaking skills which are encouraged through activities during group time. The quality of these discussions is very high and is a particular strength of the school's work. As a result, children make rapid improvements in their use of spoken language and ability to question and respond effectively.
- Activities to promote children's learning about the sounds that letters make encourage them to develop early reading skills effectively and the progress children make in this area is good. Daily sessions where children share stories have a significant impact on their enjoyment and willingness to read independently.
- Children with disabilities and special educational needs make good and often outstanding progress as a result of high levels of support. Staff work very closely with a range of other agencies to ensure that children's needs are met very well.
- The school provides a good degree of challenge for the most-able children, as activities are usually closely matched to children's abilities and the overall progress they make is outstanding. Occasionally, however, some could make even better progress if given even more challenging tasks.
- Opportunities for mark-making and writing have a high profile in both indoor and outdoor learning and are frequently encouraged in all areas of learning. Consequently, the progress that children make in this area is outstanding.
- Children have a good awareness of mathematical language, which they demonstrated when baking, as they weighed out ingredients, talked about sequencing the different steps in making a cake and counted out the eggs as they broke them into the bowl.
- Children's work is displayed with pride in the nursery and links are made with a range of areas of learning and children's home circumstances. Each group base area includes a large display board which features examples of all the children's learning which has taken place at home, including key phrases in their home language, if this is not English, photographs, art work, writing and items of interest to individuals.

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	106016
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	448118

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	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bryan Lees
Headteacher	Joanne O'Raw
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2012
Telephone number	0161 480 0867
Fax number	0161 429 9254
Email address	headteacher@larkhill-nur.stockport.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

