

Stonehill Nursery School

Stonehill Road, Derby, Derbyshire DE23 6TJ

Inspection dates

28 February–1 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not maintained the outstanding quality of education since the previous inspection.
- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. The quality of teaching does not enable children to make good progress.
- Teachers' expectations for children are not high enough.
- Children are not given enough opportunities to develop their language and communication skills, particularly their speaking skills.
- The curriculum does not provide children with the breadth of opportunities they need to develop their skills and knowledge well across all areas of learning.
- Assessment is weak. As a result, teachers do not always plan activities which fully support children to take the next steps in their learning.
- Adults do not question children effectively to check their understanding in order to provide additional support or challenge.
- There has been no senior leader deployed full-time at the school since January 2017.
- Leaders are not rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching and learning to identify the factors that are preventing children from making good progress.
- The performance management of staff does not identify precise areas for development and is not sufficiently linked to improving outcomes for children.

The school has the following strengths

- Children's personal, social and emotional development is good and the school promotes safeguarding effectively.
- All staff have positive relationships with parents. Children and their families are known well. Communication between home and school is good.
- The school is making effective use of the early years pupil premium.
- The provision for two-year-olds is good.
- The new headteacher is consistently communicating a clear vision and is committed to securing rapid improvements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - urgently deploying a senior leader to work full-time at the nursery
 - monitoring teaching and learning more frequently and rigorously so that weaknesses are tackled quickly
 - making sure that the recently introduced systems for managing staff performance are used effectively to identify training needs and to improve the quality of teaching and learning
 - making sure that all staff have a good knowledge of how children are achieving through accurate teacher assessments and a more detailed analysis of performance information.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - making sure that teachers have high expectations of what children can achieve
 - making sure that teachers are clear about what children already know and use this knowledge to plan engaging activities that motivate and challenge all children
 - developing adults' skills in the teaching of communication and language, particularly speaking skills
 - improving adults' skills in questioning children so that they can effectively check their understanding and extend their thinking
 - making sure that teachers plan a rich, creative and exciting curriculum, based on children's interests, which will promote effective learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The new headteacher is bringing a sharp and renewed focus on improving the quality of education. However, leadership and management require improvement because the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good for all children. Leaders have not been consistently effective in ensuring that children learn at a good pace since the previous inspection.
- The senior teacher working full-time at the nursery relinquished her leadership responsibilities in January 2017. Since that time, there has been no full-time senior leader working on-site at the school. The headteacher and governors recognise that this needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency in order to secure the necessary improvements.
- The headteacher has an accurate understanding of what constitutes good teaching and is aware that the monitoring of teaching has not been regular or rigorous enough over the last year. She is setting higher expectations, ensuring that there is a consistency of approach from all staff and setting aspirational targets for improvement.
- The headteacher has identified that not all assessments made by adults are accurate. As a result, staff do not always have a clear understanding of the progress children are making or the next steps they need to take in their learning.
- The headteacher is quickly establishing systems for all staff to develop professionally through appropriate training and support. For example, all staff are being given the opportunity to visit an outstanding nursery to observe best practice.
- Similarly, arrangements for performance management are being reviewed to ensure that all staff have an individual development plan to improve their practice and that targets are linked to outcomes for children.
- The curriculum covers all areas of learning but is too narrow. Learning activities do not always embrace children's own ideas and interests. Consequently, activities are not highly engaging or motivating and limit children's progress.
- The curriculum promotes children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Children show respect for the many different cultures represented in their school, celebrate differences and similarities with others and treat everyone equally. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Accurate self-evaluation underpins school improvement planning. The school's plans for improvement identify the correct actions to secure the necessary developments at the school. There is a clear rationale for each target with a clear focus on improving learning outcomes for children.
- Parents and carers are positive about the school's work. The enthusiasm of the children as they arrive for each session reflects the effective partnerships with parents to settle children quickly when they begin in the nursery. Parents spoke of their trust and confidence in the new headteacher.
- Extra funding for disadvantaged children is being used effectively. A sound action plan has been devised with clear success criteria linked to improving children's outcomes.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to working with senior leaders to ensure rapid improvements. The chair of the governing body is providing a clear steer and is ambitious for the school.
- Governors are increasing their visits to the school to gain a more accurate picture of what is happening on the ground. As a result, they are increasingly confident in asking relevant questions of senior leaders and do not simply take reports at face value.
- The safeguarding governor has a clear understanding of his role and is diligent in reviewing safeguarding procedures with school leaders to ensure that they are robust. This helps to ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders take swift action if they have any concerns over the welfare of a child. They know their local context well and are aware of the particular local issues that can put children at risk.
- All staff have been trained on safeguarding and child protection, including training to protect children from the risks of extremism and radicalisation.
- Senior leaders ensure that accurate records are kept of all aspects of safeguarding. This ensures that they have a clear oversight of children's well-being.
- The school works effectively with families and a range of external agencies, including social care, the local authority and health professionals, to ensure the well-being of children whose circumstances may make them particularly vulnerable.
- Controlled access to all areas of the nursery and regular paediatric first aid training for all staff contribute effectively to ensuring that children are kept safe. Parents who spoke with the inspector agreed that their children are well cared for.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because not enough children are making good progress.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what children can achieve.
- Most adults have a good understanding of how young children learn. However, they do not plan exciting and challenging activities based on accurate assessment of what the children know and can already do. As a result, children do not make the progress they are capable of, particularly the most able.
- Staff do not always question children effectively to deepen their understanding or reinforce learning. Consequently, children often flit from one activity to another because their engagement is too superficial to deepen their knowledge and understanding well or they find it too difficult.

- Play is not always purposeful or planned well enough to develop children’s curiosity and interest. The resources which are available to children are sometimes not open-ended enough and this limits children’s ability to develop their imagination well.
- Too often, staff miss opportunities to model language, reinforce and introduce new vocabulary and integrate songs and rhymes to develop children’s communication and understanding. As a result, children do not make good progress in their communication and language skills, particularly their speaking skills.
- The outdoor area provides some good opportunities for children to develop their skills in exploring, investigating and learning about the natural world. For example, some children were investigating mini-beasts and used magnifying glasses and pictures to identify and name them.
- The support provided by teaching assistants is sometimes good. For example, children who were making playdough pancakes were challenged to count up to 20. The teaching assistant then posed the question, ‘what would come after 20?’ This enabled the children in this group to make good progress in their counting skills. However, the impact of the support of other teaching assistants on children’s learning is often unclear. For example, a music session led by a teaching assistant did not promote effective learning because the organisation of the session was poor, planning was not based on accurate assessment and the children’s engagement was at a very low level.
- The provision for two-year-olds is good. Skilled staff ensure that there is a good range of learning experiences, both indoors and outdoors. High-quality, open-ended resources ensure that children can develop their own ideas and benefit from individual support. Adults take every opportunity to develop children’s language skills by modelling sentences and building on what the children already know. For example, the teaching assistant skilfully developed a child’s language by introducing the vocabulary of ‘tipped, sprinkled and mixed’ as they made porridge together.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good.
- All staff instil a calm atmosphere in school and children work together harmoniously. This successfully develops children’s self-confidence and ability to socialise and communicate well together.
- Children and their families are well supported by a bilingual teaching assistant who ensures that any barriers in communication are quickly and sensitively resolved.
- Children are learning to become helpful citizens. For example, they share gifts in the local community at harvest time and raise funds for charities.
- Children are encouraged to develop independence and responsibility. They self-register at the beginning of each session and help staff to tidy away resources.
- Children enjoy choosing and serving their own healthy snacks and drinks. This promotes healthy lifestyles effectively.

- Staff are alert to any dangers and prompt children to keep themselves safe. For example, staff support young children in feeling secure when talking to visitors through providing them with reassurances but also reaffirming the importance of not talking to strangers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- A warm welcome for every child provides a positive start to the day. Staff have a deep commitment to finding out what is important for each child and, as a result, children settle quickly and happily.
- Children are polite, friendly and treat each other kindly.
- Children learn to behave well, work independently, share resources and play fairly. Adults are good role models for the children of how to behave and get along with others.
- Staff at the school are working hard with parents to help them understand the importance of regular attendance. As a result, the proportion of children who attend regularly is increasing and children are establishing good habits in readiness for primary school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Most children start school with skills that are below those typically expected for their age in all areas of the curriculum. Too many children do not make good progress as they move through the nursery because activities are not planned well enough on accurate assessments of what children know and can already do. Consequently, outcomes for children require improvement.
- Children's progress in developing their communication and language skills, particularly their speaking skills, is extremely slow. Staff do not always act as good role models in describing, asking, questioning and giving children time to think and respond.
- The outdoor provision does not provide children with innovative play experiences which fully support, extend and improve their physical abilities. For example, there are few opportunities for children to practise balancing, climbing or jumping.
- Children show a growing awareness of mathematical language as they talk about numbers in a sequence, order the events in a story and name mathematical shapes. However, sometimes, opportunities are missed to interweave skills such as counting, matching and ordering into everyday routines.
- Daily story times ensure that children enjoy regular times to share books together. In some sessions, for example, adults help children to use picture clues to predict what will happen next, check children's understanding of vocabulary and provide opportunities for children to act out favourite parts of the story. This helps to promote an early love of reading.

- Disadvantaged children receive a range of targeted support such as 'play and stay' sessions where staff effectively model story-telling and book-sharing skills. As a result, parents are becoming more skilled and confident in sharing books at home with their children and their progress in language development is more rapid.
- Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Their emotional development is supported particularly well by the high levels of care that all staff provide. Staff are attentive to children's needs and help them to settle happily. This promotes their emotional well-being and raises their self-esteem. For example, when a child is upset, staff are quick to calm them, providing emotional stability through kind words and comfort and speaking in a soothing voice. Because staff know the children and their families well, they understand the children's needs and are able to support them well.

School details

Unique reference number	112476
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10023326

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Adams
Headteacher	Louise Foster
Telephone number	01332 341636
Website	www.stonehill.derby.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stonehill.derby.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The headteacher of Stonehill Nursery School retired in July 2015. The school subsequently federated with Dale Community Primary School in September 2015. From September 2015, a senior teacher held the leadership responsibility for Stonehill Nursery School. However, this responsibility was relinquished in January 2017. There has been no senior leader based at the nursery since January 2017. The headteacher at the federation retired in September 2016. The deputy headteacher was appointed as acting headteacher and was successfully appointed as the new permanent headteacher the week prior to the inspection.
- The nursery is of an average size for this type of school.

- The vast majority of children are learning English as an additional language. The majority are from a Pakistani Muslim heritage with an increasing number from an Eastern European background.
- The proportion of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged children, for whom the early years pupil premium provides support, is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed children's learning in seven sessions, or part sessions, including three observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders from the federation, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke informally to parents at the beginning of the school day.
- The inspector considered a range of documentation including: the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; the school's most recent information on children's achievement; children's learning journals; and information relating to attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Dorothy Bathgate, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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