

Inspection of Oxclose Nursery School

Oxclose Crescent, Spennymoor, County Durham DL16 6RU

Inspection dates:

27 and 29 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Changes to leadership arrangements have interrupted planned improvements at Oxclose Nursery School. Leaders share a common vision that all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), will achieve well. Leaders know that there is work to do. However, there is not a well-developed curriculum that clearly sets out what children will learn. Equally, not all staff have the curriculum knowledge to support children well, so children are not able to build on their prior knowledge sufficiently.

Children enjoy coming to school. They delight in being welcomed by staff as they arrive for their sessions. Staff help children to settle quickly into the supportive indoor learning environment. Staff work hard to build close relationships with children. Children feel safe because they know that a member of staff will help them with any difficulties. Children smile, and trust staff to comfort or reassure them. Many parents and carers are happy with the care provided by their child's key adult and the wider school staff.

Three-year-olds in the outdoor learning environment are not supported well enough to ensure that they learn to manage their behaviour safely. Care for children outdoors is not as strong as it is indoors. Some staff miss opportunities to support children to take managed risks as they play. Children sometimes wait for long periods of time before an adult comes to support them. Most children enjoy spending time in the outdoor learning environment. They have plenty of space in which to play and explore. Two-year-olds are encouraged to build their independence because staff show them what to do. With effective support from staff, the two-year-old children manage their behaviour well.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

There have been recent changes to the Nursery staff team, including at leadership level. Leaders want all children to experience an ambitious curriculum. They have made sure that the curriculum covers all the overarching areas of learning. However, the curriculum does not detail what children need to learn by the time they leave. Children follow their own interests. Staff consider these when planning activities. However, teaching does not focus sufficiently on making sure that children learn the specific knowledge and skills that they need. This is because knowledge and skills that children should develop are not clearly known to all staff. In turn, this means that assessments are not used effectively to check that children are gaining and remembering the knowledge and skills that they should.

Leaders have not developed in enough detail the curriculum to support children's communication and language or the foundations for early reading. Children experience a range of traditional tales, such as the 'Three Billy Goats Gruff'. However, leaders have not highlighted the vocabulary that children will learn in each area of learning. Not all staff are well trained to teach children the vocabulary that children need to learn. They do not know how to embed vocabulary into their

everyday interactions. As a result, children do not have consistent opportunity to listen to and use new words that they have been taught.

The provision for two-year-old children is strong. Staff build positive and trusting relationships with children. They do this by supporting children to manage their emotions appropriately. They are attentive to children's needs, offering comfort when children need it. Staff support children to talk by asking relevant questions. Children respond by pointing to objects of interest. They use words and short phrases to name things. Staff know the children well. They know what they can do and what they need to learn next. Most children listen well to staff. They encourage them to count, play and listen to stories they share.

Indoors, staff model the important learning behaviours of listening, concentrating and turn-taking. However, these behaviours are not reinforced consistently when children are outdoors. Staff do not always give clear messages to children about how to play appropriately outdoors. Some play is too rough. Children do not meet the same high expectations for behaviour outdoors as well as they do indoors.

Children with SEND are supported effectively by their key adults. Children's support plans make it clear how staff should support each child's individual needs. Staff follow the guidance to make sure that children join in with planned activities well. Leaders work well with parents and specialists to identify concerns early. This helps outline the support that children receive. Leaders check to make sure that children with SEND develop the knowledge and skills they need for the next stage of learning.

Leaders' plans for improvement are not precise in setting out the detailed actions and timescales to make necessary improvements. This makes it difficult for governors to check the success of leaders' work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide regular training for all staff. They make sure that everyone who works in the nursery understands the risks to children. All staff are alert to the signs that may indicate that a child is at risk of harm. Staff work well with other agencies to get the right help and support for children and their families. Through the curriculum, children are taught how to stay safe. For example, they are taught how to stay safe as a pedestrian.

Leaders follow safe recruitment practices to ensure that all those working with children are suitable to do so.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The supervision of three-year-olds in the outdoor learning environment is not as effective as it is indoors. Sometimes, the way in which children play is too boisterous. Leaders must make sure that procedures for the supervision of children teaches children to safely manage risks as they play and learn.
- Curriculum plans do not provide enough information about what children should learn in each area of learning and by when. This means that there is inconsistency in how some staff plan activities and interact with children to ensure children's learning builds sequentially. Leaders must ensure that the curriculum provides staff with the information they need to help children develop detailed knowledge and skills in all areas of learning. Leaders must make sure that staff are provided with the training and feedback they need to implement the curriculum effectively.
- Some staff do not know how to use the new assessment system to check what children know and understand about all areas of learning. This is because leaders have not identified the exact content of the curriculum that staff should be assessing. As a result, staff do not always know what children know and can do. Leaders must ensure that all staff are confident in knowing how to check what children know and remember across all areas of learning.
- Leaders' improvement plans do not make clear the actions to be taken or the timescales to achieve improvements in the school. This makes it difficult for governors to use these plans to hold leaders to account. Leaders need to make sure that improvement plans clarify priorities, arrangements for monitoring and timescales.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 113973 |
| Local authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 10228146 |
| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 4 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 64 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Pamela Sneath |
| Headteacher | Daniel Harrison |
| Website | www.oxclosenursery.durham.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 10 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- In November 2018, Oxclose Nursery School federated with Ox Close Primary School.
- As part of the Ox Close Federation, the school shares a governing body. An executive headteacher oversees both schools.
- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of the governing body has been appointed.
- Ox Close Federation provides breakfast and after-school clubs that are based at Oxclose Nursery School.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher and other leaders, including those responsible for the curriculum, children with SEND and safeguarding.
- The lead inspector spoke with four members of the governing body, including the vice-chair of governors. The chair of the governing body joined the meeting online. The lead inspector also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in communication and language, mathematics and understanding the world. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, spoke to staff and visited group sessions. Inspectors also considered aspects of the school's work on literacy and expressive arts and design.
- Inspectors discussed safeguarding with a wide range of staff, including those responsible for this aspect of the school's work. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, accident logs and the checks on the suitability of adults to work with children.
- The lead inspector spoke with parents to gather their views about their experiences of the nursery. Inspectors also viewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Kathryn McDonald, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Zoe Westley

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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