

The Gill Blowers Nursery School

1 Mossdale Court, Teesdale, Luton, Bedfordshire LU4 9JL

Inspection dates

19–20 September 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The school has not sustained the good standards identified at the previous inspection. Leaders' and governors' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is overly generous. Leaders do not attend to weaknesses by setting priorities for improvement quickly enough.
- Leaders lack clarity about what the information is telling them about how well children are doing. Despite an abundance of paperwork, leaders have not ensured that there are consistent, rigorous enough systems in place to use this information incisively to assess children's progress.
- Governors rely too heavily on the information provided by the headteacher, without questioning or challenging this evidence sufficiently.
- Governors do not have an accurate understanding about the quality of teaching, children's achievement or the impact of the additional funding that the school receives.
- Leaders have not ensured that their monitoring systems improve the quality of teaching. As a result, teaching is too variable throughout the school.
- Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan next steps in children's learning and ensure that work is well suited to children's needs. Teachers' expectations of what children can achieve from their starting points can be too low, especially for the most able children.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders promote an effective safeguarding culture that ensures that children are happy, safe and secure.
- Children's personal development, behaviour and welfare are good throughout the school. This is because all adults care for, and nurture, children effectively.
- The provision for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is led well. This includes the children who are part of the specialist resource provision.
- Middle leaders are passionate about their roles and manage their allocated responsibilities efficiently.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - governors are clear about their strategic roles and effectively hold senior leaders to account
 - the governing body uses a broader range of evidence to gain an accurate view of the school so it is in a stronger position to hold leaders to account
 - leaders use the wealth of assessment information more precisely so that they can improve children's outcomes, particularly for the most able and those children eligible for pupil premium funding
 - leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning holds staff to account for children's progress, and improves the standards being achieved by children from their various starting points.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that all adults use assessment practice routinely to capture children's learning and collate evidence that secures accurate teacher assessments
 - making sure that all adults are clear about what children already know and using this knowledge to plan engaging activities that motivate and challenge all children, especially the most able.

An external review of governance should be undertaken, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders, including governors, do not have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and as a result, their self-evaluation is overly generous. Leaders' plans for improvement are not sharply focused on the most important things the school needs to do to improve further.
- Leaders are not using assessment well enough to provide a clear picture as to how well children are doing, so that they can precisely pinpoint individuals or groups of children who are falling behind. Inspection evidence particularly highlighted this for those children eligible for pupil premium funding and the most able children. Leaders' recent changes to their assessment system have not been well enough thought out. There remains a lack of clarity by leaders in how to use this assessment and a lack of confidence in assessing children's attainment accurately, both on entry to the provision and while in school.
- Leaders have not ensured that the funding for disadvantaged children is used judiciously enough. Although leaders know how the money is spent, it is not having a consistently positive impact on improving children's learning and outcomes. This is because the assessment system in place is not precisely measuring children's progress from their varying starting points. Leaders do not check closely enough the impact of the pupil premium funding upon raising disadvantaged children's achievement.
- A fun, broad and balanced curriculum is provided for children within all areas of learning. The school's curriculum is having a positive impact on children's personal development, as well as their ability to settle quickly, their behaviour and positive 'can do' attitudes to learning.
- Leaders make an effective contribution to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Even at a very young age, children are encouraged to contribute towards their day-to-day school life and consider British values. For example, the 'children's parliament' allows children the opportunity to 'have their say' about what happens in school. Children are consistently encouraged to be respectful of each other and are taught from an early age about sharing, fairness and tolerance.
- Middle leaders keenly and passionately undertake their roles. This leads to well-organised, effective learning environments that encourage children to be inquisitive and imaginative, and their sense of awe and wonder to be developed. Inspection evidence confirms that middle leaders demonstrate that they have the capacity to continue to develop, be strategic and successfully improve their leadership skills further.
- Additional funding for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively, including within the specialist resource base. Adults consistently apply the school's chosen approach to planning and support for these children. Consequently, careful monitoring and review ensure that children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their various starting points.
- While leaders successfully engage with parents in a number of ways, some are more effective than others. Parents of children who have special educational needs and/or

disabilities were particularly complimentary about the support their children receive and how well leaders communicate with them about their child's progress. A few other parents reported that they would like more information about how well their child is doing at school.

- The local authority has provided support and has advised appropriately. For example, visits by the early years consultant highlight the need for the school to consider moderating judgements as a team to ensure consistency, making sure that children have opportunities to show what they can do. They also report that there is limited evidence upon which to check judgements in writing.

Governance of the school

- Despite their passion and support for the school, and regardless of having undertaken training, governors do not carry out their strategic role as effectively as they should. In particular, there has been a significant turnover of governing body members since the previous inspection and difficulties in recruiting replacement governors. This has limited, over time, the governing body's capacity to be able to support and challenge leaders effectively so they make a big enough difference.
- Governors accept leaders' information about the school too readily. They do not question the headteacher closely about children's outcomes, and often accept explanations without probing further. They do not use their routine visits with sufficient focus on school improvement, despite the extensive time that they give to these visits. Governors have not rigorously checked children's achievement. Although governors know how the pupil premium funding is spent, they are not routinely checking the difference this is making to children's outcomes.
- Governors' work to check on the financial and safeguarding aspects of the school's provision is much stronger. Governors fulfil their statutory obligations, including all requirements related to safeguarding. Equally, governors are not afraid to ask questions of external sources to check the accuracy of funding received.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a clear ethos of care in the school and a culture of promoting children's well-being and safety. The family support worker, across both school sites, works to establish effective links between home and school for some parents.
- Staff recruitment checks are carried out in accordance with statutory requirements. This ensures that leaders, including governors, know that all adults are suitable to work with children.
- 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 potentially put children at risk.
- All staff have been trained on safeguarding and child protection, including 'Prevent' training to protect children from the risks of extremism and radicalisation. They demonstrate a thorough understanding. This was verified when, for example, the chair

of governors carried out a focus visit to speak to staff to check their understanding of 'Prevent'.

- Senior leaders and the family worker ensure that detailed, chronological and accurate records are kept of all aspects of safeguarding. This ensures that they all have a clear oversight of children's well-being and can act quickly and appropriately when they need to.
- 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 and care of all of the young children whose circumstances may make them particularly vulnerable.
- Controlled security access to all areas of the nursery on both school sites and regular paediatric first aid training for all staff contribute effectively to ensuring that children are kept safe. Parents who spoke with the inspectors agreed that their children are well looked after and cared for.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Across both school sites, and within the classes for children aged two to four years old, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies. This inconsistency contributes towards teaching, learning and assessment not yet being good.
- Staff generally provide a range of activities that support all areas of children's learning. They carry out some observations and keep some evidence of children's progress. However, the information collected from teachers' assessments of what children know and can do, and their progress, is not used well enough in all classes and by all adults to plan activities and guide children's learning to meet the varying needs and abilities of children and for specific groups of children. Consequently, not all adults confidently know children's starting points and the progress that children make. This leads to inconsistent support for children who may need to catch up, and for those who need greater challenge.
- Expectations of what children can achieve are sometimes too low. This was particularly the case for the most able children, most notably for the children who have already spent a year at Gill Blowers Nursey. The most able children do not routinely receive and undertake work that pushes them to reach the higher standards of learning they are capable of.
- Children have opportunities to develop their independence and self-sufficiency in a number of different ways. For example, children were seen working well, setting up construction equipment, using art materials and following simple instructions. However, a few adults do not always take regular enough opportunities to give children the effective verbal feedback that they need to help them develop their independence and their work further.
- Some staff support children's communication and language development well. For example, they use repetition of commonly used vocabulary, so children hear it modelled regularly and subsequently attempt to say it themselves. This is contributing towards effective development of children's skills in this area of learning. However, this is not mirrored by all adults and therefore where it is not the case, children do not

rehearse their speech as much as they could.

- Adults provide many opportunities for children to make marks on paper with various materials, develop the idea of writing recognisable letters and develop mathematical skills. Children were seen confidently exploring letter formation. Children were observed being creative, using construction to build and developing speech and language in role play areas. However, adults do not use these opportunities consistently well enough to evidence children's learning or needs.
- More-experienced staff demonstrate a sound understanding of how young children learn. In these instances, adults are well aware of the need for children to be able to apply and use their learning in practical ways from a young age. For example, a practitioner skilfully incorporated numbers, counting, shape and measure into a cooking activity. This effectively promoted children's early mathematical skills in number, shape and proportion of measurements. Children accurately counted, correctly identified shapes of pastry cutters and were able to communicate proportions of water to flour to make a solid dough that did not stick to their fingers.
- Teaching and the specific provision for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including for those children who are in the school's specialist resource provision, is effective. Children's needs are well understood and regularly reviewed by the assigned adults. Assigned staff plan well for these children, providing strong support and resources to help them, as well as encouraging them to work increasingly independently.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote children's personal development and welfare is good.
- Children are safe in the caring, nurturing environment that all adults create. All staff know the children well and demonstrate high levels of care and respect for all children. Staff make use of flexible settling-in procedures to allow time for children to become familiar with their key person. Children clearly know who their key person is, and adults have, even at this very early stage of the academic year for some children, established good relationships with the children.
- There is particularly careful, astute consideration given to the children who access the school's specialist resource provision. Their provision is appropriately tailored to their individual needs to ensure that they feel safe, calm and able to integrate positively and work effectively with their peers.
- All staff instil a composed but purposefully 'busy' atmosphere in school, and children work together productively and harmoniously. This successfully encourages and develops children's self-confidence and ability to socialise and communicate well together.
- Personal and social skills are promoted well in all teaching and learning activities. As a result, children quickly learn school routines and confidently move around the classroom areas, both inside and outdoors. Healthy snacks are provided daily and children sit and eat fruit and vegetables and have a drink while they talk about what

they have been learning about. Speaking and listening skills, and the need to be polite and sit while eating, are positively encouraged during these sessions. Children were seen being polite to one another and listening carefully as others spoke about what they were eating and what they had been doing during the morning.

- Adults encourage children to think about their own and other children's actions and the effect that these actions have on others. For example, one child was able to communicate to an adult how they may have made another child feel sad because they would not let him join in the role play with a group of children.
- Children are encouraged to develop independence, responsibility and resourcefulness. They willingly helped staff to tidy away resources, seemingly understanding that they had their own part to play in doing this. While undertaking this task, one child demonstrated that he was considering his learning because he tidied up brown sticky tape from the floor and, when asked by an adult if he wanted the bin to put it in, the child replied, 'No, I am going to make my helicopter tomorrow with it.'
- Transition arrangements, both prior to starting at Gill Blowers Nursery and afterwards, have been a successful focus of the school's work. The children's strong personal development and their positive attitudes to learning mean that personally and socially children are prepared well for their next steps in education. Close links are continually being established with nearby settings, both before, and after, children's attendance at the Gill Blowers. This ensures that the transition into school and upon their start in their Reception Year is smooth.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is good.
- Children are happy and purposefully 'busy' as they confidently take part in daily activities. Children move between various activities and access and share resources sensibly. They show care and consideration for their environment and each other.
- Snack times are calm, social occasions and staff make good use of these opportunities to promote children's participation and independence. For example, children attempt to serve themselves their snack and seek help when required. They demonstrate their good manners as they spontaneously say 'please' and 'thank you'.
- Children behave well. Adults regularly share the rules of the classroom and outside areas. Children generally adhere to these. When, and if, children forget in their eagerness to get somewhere or do something, they are usually gently reminded of expectations by adults. Children are encouraged to be kind, caring and considerate to others. They are learning more and more to do this without needing prompting.
- Leaders and staff at the school work hard with parents to help them realise the importance of regular attendance, even at a very young age. Parents are very supportive of this and have a good understanding of the significance of children attending school regularly. As a result, the proportion of children at all ages who attend school routinely is increasing. This is ensuring that children are establishing good habits in readiness for primary school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Children generally arrive at Gill Blowers with levels of development typically just below what is expected for their age. From these starting points, leaders report that children make good progress. However, because the assessment of children is not precise enough, there is too much inconsistency in how leaders are measuring children's initial starting points and progress over time.
- Teaching and learning observations show that children do make progress. However, the assessment system is not being used confidently by adults to make precise enough judgements about children's progress. This means that adults cannot confidently measure and evidence the progress children make in all areas of learning. Too often, children who may need additional support are not always receiving this rapidly enough to ensure that they catch up with their peers. This is the case most notably for children eligible for pupil premium funding.
- Assessments of children's learning do not always precisely include important information to plan effectively for their next steps. The guidance for children's next steps for learning is not always accurate or appropriate to the child's ability or needs. Consequently, expectations are not always high enough. Children who are motivated and join in activities, particularly most-able children, are not always identified or given sufficient challenge to extend their learning.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their varying starting points. This includes children integrated into the school from the specialist resource provision. This is because their needs are assessed accurately from the outset. They then receive the extra support that they need in order to make consistently good progress. Additionally, adults tasked with helping these children are well aware of children's specific needs and adapt activities so that children can appropriately access activities and subsequently achieve well.
- Inspection evidence shows that 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.
- Middle leaders oversee transition arrangements to help children make a smooth start at the school. They take the time to carry out home visits so they know the children well from the first day. Leaders offer a number of visits and meetings for parents. They are involving parents more systematically in contributing towards establishing children's starting points when they join the school. This ensures that all adults have an insight into the personal, social and emotional starting points of the children, whatever they are at the time of initially joining the provision.
- Children leave Gill Blowers Nursery with outcomes generally typical for children of the same age and so they are being adequately prepared for the Reception Year. However, there are children who are capable of better, notably disadvantaged children and the most able, and they are not being as well prepared as they could be.

School details

Unique reference number	131175
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10012506

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	133
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Denise Poore
Headteacher	Deborah Harmon
Telephone number	01582 575100
Website	www.gillblowersnursery.co.uk
Email address	admin@gillblowers.nurseryluton.com
Date of previous inspection	15–16 January 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than average.
- It is based on two sites, about a mile and a half apart – known as the Mosssdale and Leabank sites. The accommodation on both sites is at the base of a block of flats.
- Day care is provided on the Mosssdale site for children up to two years old. This is inspected and reported on separately. The early years inspection of this provision took place at the same time as this inspection.
- This school inspection focused on the provision of children from two to five years old.
- Children attend part time, for either a morning or an afternoon session.
- There have been changes to staffing since the previous inspection, including in teaching staff and middle leadership roles.
- Around half of the children come from White British backgrounds. The rest come from a range of minority ethnic groups.

- A higher proportion of children than nationally speak English as an additional language and some are at early stages of learning to speak English.
- The school has specially resourced provision, which provides up to 12 part-time places for children who have severe and complex learning needs.
- The proportion of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- There is a larger than national average proportion of children for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Both inspectors observed teaching in all classes across both school sites, including many jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. During these observations inspectors spoke with children to ascertain how they felt about school and what they were doing.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, all middle leaders, the family support worker, the school's designated lead for safeguarding, the chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector also had a telephone conversation with another member of the governing body. Discussions explored a wide range of aspects of leadership and management, children's achievement and various other areas, including attendance and safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents. These included the school's self-evaluation of its current performance and its plans for improvement; information relating to the safeguarding of children; the school's most recent information on the attainment and progress of children; minutes of meetings of the governing body; and the school's most recent information relating to the attendance and welfare of children.
- The inspectors spoke informally with parents at the start of the second day of the inspection and opportunities for parents to meet with inspectors were taken up by some parents. Account was taken of the nine responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including seven parental texts, as well as the 18 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Cox

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
M1 2WD

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