

# Douglas Valley Early Years Centre

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106398
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	355944
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 December 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Colin Smith

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	63
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Lesley Brothwood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Catherine Ardern
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 April 2008
<b>School address</b>	Turner Street Off Greenough Street, Wigan Lancashire WN1 3SU
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons involving 15 members of staff, and held meetings with governors, staff and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at assessments and records of children's attainment and progress, curriculum planning, monitoring records, school improvement plans and staff and 29 parent questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Children's progress and attainment in Communication, Language and Literacy, particularly the development of early writing skills.
- The effectiveness of key persons in assessing learning and progress and identifying the next steps.
- The involvement of governors and the whole staff in action-planning and self-evaluation to improve provision and outcomes.
- The extent to which the main nursery benefits from the quality and consistency of learning and welfare provided in pre nursery classes.

## Information about the school

The Early Years Centre is average in size for an institution of this type. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The vast majority of children are of White British heritage. Only a very small number speak English as an additional language. A deputy headteacher and a full time nursery teacher were appointed in September 2010. The centre has been awarded the Wigan Quality Standard for its nursery and childcare provision. In addition to the main nursery for three- to four-year-olds, the governing body manages a breakfast- and after-school club and early years childcare from birth to three for a maximum of 31 children. These provisions were evaluated as part of the inspection. The adjoining children's centre services are subject to a separate inspection.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Douglas Valley is a good Early Learning Centre. It is rapidly improving. The overall effectiveness of nursery and childcare provision is equally good because the same demands and high expectations are made of all services. The Early Learning Centre has a number of outstanding features, not least the exemplary care, guidance and support, which strongly promote children's welfare and independent learning. Children's delight in learning is mirrored by their happy faces, exemplary behaviour and excellent contributions to the running of the nursery. Parents are extremely appreciative of what the nursery provides. Comments such as, 'I trust staff implicitly,' typify the views of parents.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in nursery and achieve well. Many enter with knowledge and skills that are below those expected for their age. By the end of nursery, children's attainment is typical for their age overall and higher than expected in personal and physical development. Throughout the centre children learn successfully and make good progress. Their progress in personal and mathematical development is particularly good. However, their progress in developing early writing skills and their awareness of other cultures are not as strong as other areas. This is because the writing activities provided do not capture the children's interest enough and they have only very limited understanding of other cultures.

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Children benefit from a rich curriculum and a wealth of stimulating activities. Increasingly good use of assessment identifies children's different learning needs and the next steps required to move them forward. The recent introduction of individual learning plans is already having a positive impact on their development. However, leaders are right to consider how the information can be made more accessible to temporary and trainee staff to enable them to steer children's learning towards their targets.

Leadership and management of the nursery and childcare provision are excellent. The recently-strengthened leadership team has outstanding energy, drive and ambition, particularly in inspiring commitment and teamwork, improving teaching and promoting equality, which are exemplary. Increasingly rigorous monitoring, review and appraisal have led to accurate self-evaluation, enabling the nursery to build securely on its previous successful inspection. The constant focus on enhancing provision and raising achievement places the nursery well on the road to excellence and ensures its good capacity for improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By September 2011, improve children's progress and attainment in writing by:

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- - providing more encouragement for children to engage in and develop their early writing skills in all areas of learning
- - making the printed information around the nursery more child-friendly and taking every opportunity to raise children's awareness of its meaning.
- By September 2011, improve the contribution made by temporary and trainee staff to children's learning by:
  - - making children's next steps in learning readily available to all adults to guide their interventions
  - - ensuring that all adults make full use of open questioning to extend children's spoken language and thinking skills
  - - ensuring that children are consistently helped to understand what they are learning and how well they have achieved.
- By September 2011, improve children's awareness of cultural diversity by developing stronger cultural links with the local and wider community.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of children****2**

Children's achievement, enjoyment and learning are good. Much of children's learning is exciting and captivating. They are often absorbed in exploring and experimenting, whether alone or with an adult. Their capacity to learn independently is very pronounced, for example, by designing and building model castles outdoors. Learning is active and creative, for example in making footprint patterns in the snow. Children think critically, for example, about the materials to use to build a robot. Through such activities, children learn to reason and explain, especially when adults play alongside. Such focused learning is the basis for their good overall progress. Learning and progress in early writing are satisfactory but are not as strong as in other areas, because children prefer other activities and are not sufficiently attracted to the writing tasks. Sensitive and carefully-targeted support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and English as an additional language, enables them to make good progress. Girls have made better progress than boys in the past. Leaders have taken careful note and designed activities that have more appeal to boys. Consequently, the gap is closing.

Children's initial and lasting experiences of childcare and the main nursery are of a warm, reassuring atmosphere in which their confidence blossoms. Children feel very safe and leave their parents without hesitation. Their excellent spiritual development is evident in their wonder of learning and high self-esteem. Adherence to simple rules and co-operative play reflects children's particularly good moral and social development. However, their cultural development is less well-developed because of limited opportunities to encounter the richness of diverse cultures. Children's particularly good awareness of healthy diets and personal hygiene is nurtured during snack time. Through extensive outdoor play, children's co-ordination and control develop strongly and they learn to appreciate the effects of exercise. Children's exemplary behaviour is evident in their harmonious relationships and readiness to share. They show concern for others and exhibit high levels of responsibility, demonstrating their excellent contribution to the nursery. Attendance is good. Secure literacy and numeracy skills and good social skills are indicators of children's good preparation for the future.

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*These are the grades for children's outcomes*

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	2
Children's attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of children's learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which children feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Children's behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	2
Children's attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Good provision in the childcare groups ensures that by the time children reach their final nursery year they are in a strong position to pursue their interests and satisfy their curiosity. A wide range of stimulating, first-hand activities is provided, inside and outdoors. The activities are very well-prepared and attractively designed to encourage children to explore and investigate. Adults give them time and space to make choices before stepping in to channel their learning. Leaders have devised sophisticated assessment procedures, based on accurate observations of children's responses, which are used to identify the next learning steps for each child. Individual learning plans have just been introduced and are already guiding the planning of activities and influencing the way children are taught. For example, weaknesses in understanding, evident from assessments, are being addressed through specific group activities. This is where some outstanding teaching takes place, through very precise questioning that encourages children to reflect, predict and observe, for example, to solve mathematical problems using play-dough models. Key persons know the children well, review their progress frequently and are able to target their interventions very precisely. However, assessment records, next steps and individual learning plans are held in separate documents. This makes it harder for temporary and trainee staff, who do not know the children as well, to maximise their interventions. There

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are occasions, albeit infrequent, when questioning is too narrow and opportunities are missed to take children's learning forward and help them to understand what they have achieved. Writing activities often fail to tempt children, and so are not an activity of choice, and printed information is not always displayed in child-friendly language. This makes it harder for adults to refer to it, when discussing children's learning with them.

Meticulous curriculum planning is based on national guidance, assessments of children's learning and children's emerging interests. This highly-structured, personalised approach is proving hugely enjoyable and increasingly effective in enabling children to build on their earlier learning. Children's speaking, listening, reading, problem solving, reasoning and numeracy skills are particularly well catered for, but writing activities, although planned for, are not of the same standard. The curriculum is carefully adapted to support the needs of children with language and learning difficulties. For example, children who are reluctant or unable to explain their ideas are guided to make cards and talk about their families.

From the moment children enter the childcare sessions no stone is left unturned in removing obstacles to ensure that every child is happy, secure and ready to learn. Extensive training in child protection and paediatric first aid and relentless attention to cleanliness and preventing the spread of infection make a strong contribution to young children's safety and welfare. Nursery staff are painstaking in identifying and supporting the most vulnerable children. A major advantage of the nursery setting within the children's centre is the expertise available to draw on when difficulties arise. Children's excellent relationships with key persons ensure outstanding pastoral care. Particularly good induction helps children to settle happily and strong links with primary schools ensures a smooth and trouble-free transfer. Parents greatly value the good before- and after-school care provision.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## **How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher has moved the Early Years Centre forward significantly since the previous inspection. Children's progress has accelerated, attainment has risen and the quality of provision and promotion of children's welfare have been significantly strengthened. An additional leader joined the centre in September 2010. Along with the headteacher, the two have formed a highly effective and very ambitious leadership team. Their collective experience of good practice has sharpened the vision, added direction and unified staff in achieving challenging targets. These outstanding qualities, supplemented

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by rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching, children's learning and their progress, are propelling the nursery forward towards its goal of excellence. Leaders' awareness of the strengths of the nursery and the areas for improvement is clearly evident from the sharply-focused improvement plans, in which developing children's writing is a key ingredient. Extremely well-conceived criteria for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, supported by performance management and staff training, are helping to raise the quality of teaching and provision from good to outstanding, although the impact on outcomes has not yet had time to filter through. Members of the Governing Body use their professional skills in finance, health and education to good effect and are taking increasing responsibility for monitoring the work of the centre and strategic planning. Good partnerships with parents, carers and outside agencies significantly enhance children's learning and welfare and lie at the heart of the good safeguarding procedures, which ensure that staff are safely recruited and very well trained to keep children safe. Inclusion is paramount, discrimination strongly resisted and stereotyping challenged. Assessment data is carefully analysed and used to plan interventions. This ensures that any gaps in the attainment of different groups are promptly recognised and tackled. The promotion of community cohesion is good overall and very evident in the harmonious community atmosphere within the nursery. Very good links have been made with the local community, particularly with 'hard-pressed' families, to involve them in the life of the school. However, leaders know there is more to do to strengthen the centre's wider cultural links.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

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## **Views of parents and carers**

A good proportion of parents and carers returned the questionnaires. The returns were highly positive in all areas. All of the respondents felt that nursery staff kept children safe, met their children's needs and agreed that they made enough progress because of good teaching. All were positive that their children enjoyed school and very happy with their child's nursery experiences. There was a unanimous response to the questions of being kept well-informed about their children's progress and being helped to support them at home. Similarly, all parents and carers felt that the school managed behaviour well and took account of their views and suggestions. Almost all parents and carers believe that the school is led and managed well, that their children are helped to lead a healthy lifestyle and are being prepared for the future well. Inspectors endorse parents' positive view in all of these areas.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Douglas Valley Early Years Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 31 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 63 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	74	8	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	77	7	23	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	21	68	10	32	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	68	10	32	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	68	9	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	61	12	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	74	7	23	1	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	20	65	9	29	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	68	8	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	65	10	32	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	61	12	39	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	68	9	29	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	74	8	26	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its children's needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a child in their learning and development.
Attainment:	in other phases of school, for example primary schools, attainment is the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. However, there is no national average for three- and four-year-olds. Therefore, in inspections of nursery schools, inspectors take account of expectations in the age-related bands of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in nursery sessions and over longer periods of time.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



4 December 2010

Dear Children

**Inspection of Douglas Valley Early Years Centre, Wigan, WN1 3SU**

I really enjoyed my visit. Thank you for being so friendly and talking to me. I want to tell you what I found out and what I have told your parents in my report.

Your nursery is good. Some things are excellent. Grown-ups take really good care of you and keep you very safe. They also help your parents by talking about you.

You try your very best, behave wonderfully and help each other. You listen very carefully and always join in well. I think this is why you know a lot about staying safe and keeping healthy. You really enjoy your time in the nursery and are happy there.

Key persons and other adults try very hard to make your time at nursery special. There is so much to do, inside and outdoors. You have such good teaching. This is why you learn more and get better every day, even though some things are harder to learn, like beginning to write.

Grown-ups in charge of the nursery are always trying to find better ways to help you. They do an excellent job to make sure that you learn new skills every day.

I want your nursery to carry on getting better and I have asked your headteacher and key persons to do three more things.

- Give you special help to learn to write, which I know that some of you find difficult.
- Make sure that other grown-ups, who do not know you as well as your key persons, find out as much as possible about what you have learned already so they can help you with the next part.
- Help you to learn more about people who are different from you.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Colin Smith

Lead Inspector

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