

# Strong Close Nursery School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 107185         |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Bradford       |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 356102         |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 7–8 March 2011 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Jane Hughes    |

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>                     | Maintained   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3–5  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 135  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                                   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Mrs Jill Gillhome                                    |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Mrs Beverly George                                   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 13 May 2008  |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Airedale Road<br>Keighley<br>West Yorkshire BD21 4LW |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01535 605272   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01535 692556   |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | office@strongclose.co.uk                             |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Age group</b>         | 3–5            |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>  | 7–8 March 2011 |
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed 11 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and talked with children. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, policies, assessment and tracking systems, safeguarding procedures and children's work. Inspectors examined questionnaires from 47 parents and carers, as well as those from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress made by summer-born children.
- How well the school ensures that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities do as well as their peers.
- Key strengths of the curriculum, with particular reference to the effectiveness of partnership work on children's outcomes.
- How effectively the relatively new senior management team works with the governing body to move the school forward.

## Information about the school

Strong Close nursery school is of larger than average size when compared to other nursery schools. It provides 16 additionally resourced places for children with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. The nursery school feeds into more than 20 primary schools and attracts families from well outside its immediate catchment area. Approximately 50% of children are of minority ethnic heritage. Just under 33% of children speak English as an additional language. Almost 11% of children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has achieved Inclusion Quality Standard (Gold) as well as Investors in People status. It is working towards the Investors in Families charter mark. An acting headteacher was appointed on secondment in September 2009. She was subsequently appointed as substantive headteacher in September 2010.

The nursery school is co-located with Strong Close Children's Centre. The school also works in partnership with the Pre-School Learning Alliance to provide 55 full day care places for children aged from 3 months to 5 years. Both these settings are subject to separate inspections.

**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

Strong Close Nursery is a good nursery school. It has several outstanding features. Most notable among these is the keen regard to the promotion of equality of opportunity, which is at the heart of all its work. Parents and carers typically sum up their views of the school with affirmative remarks, such as 'happy with everything' and 'just brilliant'.

Children's attainment fluctuates to some extent in relation to the makeup of different cohorts and whether their age on entry restricts them to only three terms at the nursery school rather than five. By the time they move on to Reception classes in primary school, children are mostly working at the levels expected for their age, and some beyond. This is the result of generally strong teaching, accurate assessment and high expectations from all adults. Nonetheless, there are some inconsistencies within the teaching which prevent it from being even stronger. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from well-targeted support from knowledgeable staff. They, too, make good progress. The high quality curriculum engages children totally in their learning through a wealth of imaginative and memorable experiences. These help them to make the most of their time in school.

Children show an excellent understanding of how to stay safe. Crucially for children this age, they feel secure when at nursery and know that the adults will always help them. Such a keen sense of well-being springs from the first class care, guidance and support all the adults provide for children, whatever their individual circumstances. Children's exemplary behaviour also leads to positive outcomes for all groups of children. They accept differences between people as normal. They spend their time purposefully and, simultaneously, have great fun.

The school ensures high quality engagement with parents and carers with regard to school routines and children's learning. Parents and carers say that they 'feel very lucky' that their child attends this nursery school.

Senior leaders and the governing body form a strong partnership. Leadership at all levels continues to develop under the headteacher's guidance. Currently, some middle leaders are less effective in the way they develop staff knowledge and expertise. There is a clear focus on improving outcomes for all children. Priorities are correctly identified through accurate and well-evidenced self-evaluation. Improvements since the last inspection, coupled with the consolidation of previously good and outstanding performance, demonstrate that the school's capacity for sustained improvement remains good.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to consistently good and better by:

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- – ensuring all adults consistently promote children's independent learning and eliminate instances of over-support
- – ensuring adults promote children's speaking and listening skills during outdoor activities as effectively as when children learn and play indoors.
- Extend the impact of leadership and management by:
- – ensuring leaders at all levels, especially the leaders of each area of learning, provide clear direction for other staff about how to improve their practice and skills.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

**2**

Children thoroughly enjoy the time they spend at nursery and achieve well. They launch into the vast array of activities the second they arrive. Despite their young age, children are frequently seen working well together. For example, some were problem solving in pairs, about how to mark out the outline of a 'space rocket', where to put the door, and how to complete the countdown to 'blast off'. Others combined well in various role-play situations, such as re-enacting favourite television programmes with small world toys. The 'audience' sat on the settee and children took turns to stand behind the television screen with their models. The children organised this with minimum fuss and no direct adult input. Similarly, children's excellent attitudes and behaviour ensure that they make the most of the time they spend with their teachers and other adults. They are keen to please and behave exceptionally well. For example, during the inspection, when completing observational drawings of daffodils, children listened intently as the adult pointed out the different parts of the flower. They wielded the magnifying glass adeptly to check what they could see beyond the petals. They clearly feel relaxed and completely safe in school and develop strong bonds with their key workers. They talk about the healthy snacks and drinks they enjoy and know these are good for them.

Children's attainment fluctuates but is broadly at the levels expected in all areas of learning by the time they leave the nursery school. Some children exceed these levels, although this is more difficult for the children who only spend three terms here. Children make good progress from their generally below expected starting points, particularly in terms of their social and language development. Children who speak English as an additional language respond well to bilingual support during one-to-one and group activities. As a result, they make similar progress to other children. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve as effectively as their peers as a result of the strong, personalised provision they enjoy. Recent initiatives to improve outcomes for summer born children, and boys in particular, are bearing fruit as the greater focus on practical activities engages them well in their learning. Children show respect for others and automatically embrace difference. For example, they all enjoy Christmas and Eid celebrations and enjoy sampling different cuisines and dressing up. Attendance levels are at those expected for children of this age.

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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:<br>Children's attainment <sup>1</sup>  | 3        |
| 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>1</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>2</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:<br>Children's attendance <sup>1</sup>  | 3        |
| <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?

Adults bring learning to life for children. Well-resourced learning environments both inside and outdoors enable children to create imaginary worlds, appreciate the wonders of nature, and develop their skills in all areas of learning. Generally, adults are adept at encouraging children to become increasingly independent in terms of their learning. In the outstanding and good practice seen, adults ask pertinent questions of children and encourage them to problem solve in order to learn more effectively. For instance, they were encouraged to design a 'space rocket', complete with nose cone and fuel flames, planning it out in chalk on the playground. After some coaxing they also added a door and an accompanying countdown grid. Occasionally, adults provide too much support and so restrict children's independent learning. At other times, they are not proactive enough in developing children's language skills, particularly through ongoing discussion outdoors. Careful planning is informed by accurate assessment of each child's individual skills. This means that all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are offered personalised support to extend their learning. Staff have a confident overview of children's next learning steps. This also enables them to deploy bilingual and other support staff to good effect.

Parents and carers comment that 'the inside and outside classrooms are fantastic'. Learning programmes contain a wide selection of activities geared to engage even the

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most reluctant learner in an exciting and imaginative world of new experiences. This is equally true for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff are careful to provide a rich variety of experiences to support each child's individual needs and circumstances. These ensure that children delight in music or movement, for example, while also experiencing what it means to socialise with others and to think of their needs too. Children's work is celebrated around the nursery and also in bulging records of achievement that carefully document the progress children make. Staff are quick to point out the relative merits of different foods and physical exercise so that children understand what is good for them. Safety issues are clearly addressed whenever appropriate.

High quality pastoral support for children is central to the school's provision. This is reflected in parents' and carers' positive responses to inspection and school surveys. They typically comment, 'the staff have a real interest in the children and are like an extended family to them' and 'children are settled and supported in a wonderful manner'. The school effectively implements several initiatives to sustain rising attendance figures. Consistently high expectations of all adults ensure that children know exactly what expectations adults have of them. As a result, the school is harmonious and orderly.

*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:<br>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>1</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>  | <b>1</b> |

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

The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear vision of how they wish the nursery school to develop. Ideas are shared daily and staff are clear about expectations and desired outcomes in all aspects of the school's life. Staff have a clear understanding that they are responsible for the progress of children in their key worker groups. Although leadership roles are increasingly shared by staff, not all are confident in sharing with colleagues their expertise in a particular area of learning. As a result, middle leadership lacks some impact.

The school has accurate knowledge and understanding of its context and enjoys a strong local reputation. Careful planning ensures that all faiths and cultures are embraced within school life so that children learn to value diversity and become increasingly aware of, and at ease with, difference. There is excellent engagement of parents and carers to ensure they are more actively involved in their children's learning. Parents and carers are highly appreciative of the education and care the school provides for their children. The school canvasses parents' and carers' views regularly. As a result, formal consultation meetings have been introduced, records of achievement now go home and there are also more bilingual staff in school. Effective partnerships exist with other schools and organisations.

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In particular, the leadership looks for ways to develop existing skills through external expertise. Some recent success includes work with outside music specialists to develop children's skills across all areas of learning, not just creativity.

The school adopts good practice with regard to safeguarding procedures. Most documentation is robust, particularly with regard to adults' suitability to work with children. Staff are well trained and ensure that the setting is secure for children. Adults promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination to the highest degree. Inclusive practice is a priority and consequently, there is little unevenness in outcomes for different groups of children. Where some remain, for example, with regard to the progress of summer born boys, these are given the highest priority for improvement. The school promotes community cohesion well. Staff make the most of local diversity to illustrate differences and similarities between faiths both in and out of school. The governing body is well engaged in school life and committed to supporting the school's improvement. It provides challenge and support to senior leaders. Experience varies within the governing body and parents are well represented. Of particular note is the way the governing body refused to compromise on quality when it came to recruiting a headteacher. This prolonged the process and necessitated much input and support from the governing body. Well-organised administrators and ancillary staff maintain the school's daily smooth running. The school deploys its resources well. It achieves good outcomes for children and provides good value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The leadership and management of teaching and learning   | 2        |
| <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>1</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> |

## Views of parents and carers

The responses of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire demonstrate strong support for the school's work and, in particular, how well their

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children enjoy school and make good progress as a result of strong teaching. This feedback reflects that gathered by the school from its own surveys. Typically, parents and carers comment that 'there is a lovely warm atmosphere' and that 'this is a great school'. Within the very few negative comments received, there was no underlying pattern. In their questionnaire responses, a very small minority signaled concern over the information they receive on their children's progress, how well the school helps them to support their children's learning, how well the school prepares children for the future, how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour, and how well the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. During the inspection, inspectors scrutinised school procedures with regard to these areas. Inspectors' conclusions are reflected within in the body of this report.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Strong Close Nursery School 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 inspector received 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 135 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements  | Strongly agree |    | Agree |    | Disagree |   | Strongly disagree |   |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
|   | Total          | %  | Total | %  | Total    | % | Total             | % |
| My child enjoys school  | 36             | 77 | 11    | 23 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe  | 34             | 72 | 13    | 28 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress  | 31             | 66 | 13    | 28 | 3        | 6 | 0                 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school   | 28             | 60 | 19    | 40 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school   | 31             | 66 | 15    | 32 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning  | 30             | 64 | 16    | 34 | 1        | 2 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle   | 31             | 66 | 16    | 34 | 0        | 0 | 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) | 16             | 34 | 23    | 49 | 3        | 6 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs  | 26             | 55 | 20    | 43 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour  | 25             | 53 | 19    | 40 | 1        | 2 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns   | 32             | 68 | 13    | 28 | 1        | 2 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively   | 35             | 74 | 12    | 26 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school   | 34             | 72 | 13    | 28 | 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      | 59  | 35   | 3            | 3          |
| Primary schools      | 9   | 44   | 39           | 7          |
| Secondary schools    | 13  | 36   | 41           | 11         |
| Sixth forms          | 15  | 39   | 43           | 3          |
| Special schools      | 35  | 43   | 17           | 5          |
| Pupil referral units | 21  | 42   | 29           | 9          |
| All schools          | 13  | 43   | 37           | 8          |

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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.**



9 March 2011

Dear Children

**Inspection of Strong Close Nursery School, Keighley, BD21 4LW**

Thank you for showing me all the fun things you do at nursery. This is what I found out while I was in your school looking at everything you do. I hope your teachers will read my letter to you.

You told me that nursery is fun, that there is lots to do, and that you like playing with your friends. Lots of you like drawing. I saw some beautiful pictures of the sunny, yellow daffodils that you drew. Your teachers made sure you looked at them really carefully so you didn't miss any important bits! All the children and adults smile and laugh a lot because they enjoy being at Strong Close Nursery. You all learn well and behave beautifully. I really liked seeing how you help each other when you have tricky problems to solve. You know a lot about how to stay safe. You also told me that all the adults are kind to you. I saw how well they look after you.

Even good schools like yours can do some things even better. Your teachers are going to make sure that they remind you all the time about how to do things for yourselves, such as writing your own names on your work and hanging up your aprons. They are also going to have longer chats with you when you are playing outdoors.

Watch out for 'the Jigaree'!

Very best wishes to all of you.

Yours sincerely

Jane Hughes

Lead inspector

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