

Highters Heath Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103134
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376829
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sandra Langston
Headteacher	Claire Quinlan
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2009
School address	11 School Road Warstock Birmingham B14 4BH
Telephone number	0121 4742356
Fax number	0121 4742356
Email address	enquiry@hiheathn.bham.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Twelve sessions of learning were observed, involving seven practitioners. Discussions were held with parents and carers, staff and members of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at children's work, assessments, learning journals, local authority reviews, planning, 17 questionnaires from parents and carers and seven from staff.

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

- To what extent all groups of children, especially boys, make the same amount of progress.
- How well children are acquiring basic skills of letter sounds, early reading, writing and numeracy.
- How effectively the role of middle leaders contributes to school self-evaluation.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized nursery. Nearly all of the children are of White British descent. A small minority are from Pakistan, China and Somalia. Just under a fifth of the children are learning English as an additional language, and most of these children are at the early stages of learning English. A very small proportion of children are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly speech, language and communication difficulties. In 2011, the nursery received its renewed Basic Skills Quality Mark. The headteacher joined the school in January 2011.

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

This is a good nursery where children make good progress in all six areas of learning. Staff are particularly adept at helping children to acquire good communication skills and develop high levels of confidence, independence and self-esteem. Both children and their parents and carers are very fond of the nursery. One said, 'My son cries when he has to come home.' Another expressed, 'My daughter loves coming to nursery because every day something magical happens.' Parents and carers are delighted with everything that the nursery has to offer, including the workshops that help them become more involved in their children's learning.

All groups of children achieve well, including boys, because teaching meets their needs effectively. The well-planned curriculum is carefully matched to children's interest levels and learning is carefully crafted around children's engagement in activities, although staff sometimes miss opportunities to challenge the most able children in recording letters and numbers. Rigorous systems for care, guidance and support and a strong emphasis on the uniqueness and well-being of each child contribute effectively to their personal, social and emotional development. From a very early age, these children are avid learners who are interested in the world around them. During the inspection they were seen handing out magnifying glasses to adults, encouraging them to find worms and insects in the soil!

Since the appointment of the new headteacher, staff have improved the accuracy of their assessments and observations of children. Children quickly establish routines and excellent relationships contribute to their excellent behaviour. Clear expectations are communicated so that children know what is expected of them. Children's awareness of healthy eating and safety, both indoors and outdoors, is good. When children were seen learning outdoors they were very careful, knowing not to stand in the way of their friends coming down the slide and reminding one another that it is dangerous to push on the climbing frame. The renovation of the building has created a very friendly and welcoming, enabling environment in which all children thrive. Resources are good in all areas of learning. The nursery is clutter free and only carefully chosen activities are put out. This creates a sense of calm purposefulness.

Children's moral and social development is particularly good, as staff stress the consequences of their actions and the importance of getting along with one another. They know their own community well, but do not have enough opportunities to develop their understanding of how others live in different countries.

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The headteacher has already, together with her deputy, accurately analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the nursery. They and the governing body are aware that not all staff are sufficiently involved in the self-evaluation process, and while all the correct priorities have been identified for improvement the school development plan is not sufficiently clear on success criteria for the actions to be undertaken. This prevents the governing body from fully evaluating the cost effectiveness of its spending decisions. Nevertheless, its members provide sound governance. They are regular visitors to the nursery and know the community well. Strong teamwork and effective leadership have enabled the nursery to develop its provision and maintain a good reputation in the local community. Its capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the most able children are consistently challenged to develop their recording skills in writing and number work.
- Ensure that all staff are involved in rigorous self-evaluation, and that the resulting information is shared with the governing body in order for them to evaluate their cost effectiveness of their spending decisions.
- Provide more opportunities for children to learn about the lives of children in different countries.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

2

All groups of children achieve well. They thoroughly enjoy nursery and behave impeccably. They carefully walk around the nursery, both indoors and outdoors, forever mindful not to bump into their friends. Children start nursery with knowledge, skills and understanding below the levels expected for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress and leave with attainment broadly in line with expectations for their age. Above all, they are ready to learn and know how to stay on task and persevere in learning. All children have good opportunities to explore. In one session they stared in amazement at plastic minibeasts trapped in ice and tried to count them as they waited for the ice to melt. They marvelled at the wide range of birds found in the countryside and said that their favourites are black birds because they have big beaks. Children who are learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make equal progress to their peers. They delight in learning new vocabulary and playing with words they then use in made-up rhymes. Support for children with any difficulties is excellent as the nursery has very strong links with a range of agencies such as speech and language and educational psychologists. On rare occasions, progress is inconsistent because staff miss opportunities to extend the recording skills of more capable children.

Children feel safe in the nursery. They know that gates have to be shut and that if they are upset, they need to tell an adult. Minor disagreements are quickly settled because staff consistently explain to children the consequences of their actions.

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

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Children are kind and helpful to one another, take turns in speaking and listening, and if they throw sand on the floor, they quickly tidy up after themselves. Children love to cook with carrots and butternut squash, although they do not like the hard skin on the latter. Children are not afraid to take supported risks outdoors. They eagerly completed the obstacle course and had no problems squeezing through the plastic tunnel. Children are well prepared for their time in the reception year. They celebrate a range of festivals and read multicultural books such as *Handa's Surprise* but, as yet, they do not know enough about the lives of children in other countries.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Children's attainment ¹	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
The extent to which children feel safe	2
Children's behaviour	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Children's attendance ¹	3
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is underpinned by the staff's secure knowledge of how young children learn, and based upon detailed and insightful observations. All staff are skilled at intervening in children's learning and plan a wide range of challenging indoor and outdoor activities. The nursery is a hub of activity with staff consistently modelling how to do things and talking to children about their learning. Songs are sung to support newly acquired vocabulary so that children have plenty of opportunities to practise what they have learnt. Staff are expert talkers; the impact of the *Every Child a Talker* programme is clearly seen in daily activities.

Strengths in the curriculum include many varied activities that are planned indoors and outdoors, enabling children to use their senses. Rolling mouldable clay to develop words such as long, short, flat, and same as contributes very effectively to

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

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children’s mathematical vocabulary. Imaginative role play is linked with real-life issues as children dig in their allotments and cook healthy food in the home corner. Celebrations of festivals and the sharing of harvest produce contribute to children’s good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff have excellent relationships with parents and carers and children, and there are high levels of trust. ‘My son loves his teachers, you can’t ask for more if you know your children are happy,’ said one very happy parent. Children are well guided and supported both pastorally and academically. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities get expert advice and, as a result, make good progress. Staff work well to ensure children’s day-to-day health and safety. Children are often seen putting tissues to their noses ‘to catch the germs’.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Even though the headteacher has only been in post for under a year, she has made many changes. Her quiet, purposeful manner has won the hearts and minds of the staff, parents and carers and children, and she wants the very best outcomes for the children. An interim school development plan identifies all the areas for improvement but, as yet, it is not underpinned by rigorous success criteria. Self-evaluation, though accurate, is at the early stages of development and not all staff are fully involved in evaluating their practices according to established criteria. The headteacher is implementing this as a matter of urgency so that everyone has ownership of self-evaluation.

The monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher is accurate and regular. Other senior leaders are now playing a more proactive part in leading change and are contributing to school development planning. The nursery’s contribution to community cohesion is developing but is at an early stage at the global level. Excellent relationships with parents and carers contribute to helping them understand diversity in the locality, and the nursery has been used as a centre for Asian women to undertake study classes. All children are valued and the nursery closely monitors attainment by different groups. Leaders effectively promote equality and ensure that there is no discrimination and that no child is left behind. The headteacher works very closely with other professionals to enhance provision, especially the headteacher in the adjacent primary school and the local childminder’s group.

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The systems for safeguarding children’s health and safety meet government requirements and include appropriate policies. Children are well cared for and support for families whose circumstances make them vulnerable is underpinned by excellent links with the local children’s centre. The nursery deploys resources well to achieve good value for money and a well-thought-out plan covers any issues relating to potential budget shortfall.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The views of parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive. They are very happy with everything that the nursery provides. Parents and carers are very confident that the headteacher will always deal with issues fairly and in a very positive manner.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Highters Heath 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 inspection team received 17 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 62 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	59	7	41	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	11	65	6	35	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	11	65	6	35	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	41	10	59	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	11	65	5	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	12	71	4	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	71	4	24	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)	7	41	6	35	1	6	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	10	59	6	35	1	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	47	9	53	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	59	6	35	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	53	7	41	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	12	71	5	29	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 8 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



26 September 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Highters Heath Nursery School, Birmingham, B14 4BH

Thank you for the very warm welcome we received when we visited your nursery. It was lovely to see the many exciting things you do, and to watch you learn. You attend a good nursery where you all develop and learn well.

You are taught well and you have excellent relationships with all the adults in the nursery. You are well cared for and supported in the way your teachers record what kind of activities you are interested in. Your behaviour is excellent. You are very kind to one another and you know right from wrong. You make good progress and you walk very sensibly around the nursery. You know a lot of things about healthy eating, and tell teachers if you are not happy. You are well prepared for going into the reception class.

We have asked your headteacher and staff to do some things to make learning even better.

- Make sure that those of you who find writing and number easy have more opportunities to record and practise your letters and numbers.
- When the school tries out new ideas and buys new things to help you learn more, check how well the money has been spent.

Give you more opportunities to learn about children's lives in different countries. You can help by asking your teachers to tell you a bit more about these things through different stories and books about children's lives in different countries.

We hope you continue to enjoy learning so much.

Yours sincerely

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley
Lead inspector

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