



Grace Owen Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106975
LEA Sheffield
Inspection number 277673
Inspection dates 6 March 2006 to 7 March 2006
Reporting inspector Ms Joyce Taylor CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Hague Row
School category	Community		Parkhill
Age range of pupils	3 to 5		Sheffield, South Yorkshire S2 5SB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0114 272 2541
Number on roll	61	Fax number	0114 272 4160
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Clive Goodridge
Date of previous inspection	13 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Jean Jones

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

Grace Owen Nursery School is situated at the heart of an urban low-rise flat complex close to Sheffield city centre. The children come from an area with high levels of social and economic difficulties. It is an area awaiting major redevelopment, which makes the school's future unclear. The school caters for children from birth to five years old. There are 61 children in the nursery class who attend for part time sessions of two and a half hours in either the morning or the afternoon. Some of these children remain on site all day attending extended care facilities as well as their nursery session.

The nursery children represent many different cultures and ethnic heritages. The proportions of children having learning difficulties and/or disabilities are below average, although most have limited language skills, with a tiny proportion having a statement of special educational need. This is a school with a stable pupil population, little staff turnover and very strong community links. It was formerly in an Education Action zone and is now in an Excellence in Cities zone.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. An excellent curriculum, extremely thorough care and support, as well as good and sometimes outstanding teaching, enable the children to achieve particularly well in most aspects of their work, including their personal development. In their communication, language and literacy activities some achievement is outstanding. However, due to very low starting points the children do not reach the standards typical for their age. Leadership and management are outstanding and the headteacher has an extremely clear grasp of the work of the school.

The capacity to improve is extremely good. Since the time of the last inspection the school has re-designed itself to provide childcare alongside education. At the same time the quality of provision overall has risen from a good nursery to one that is now outstanding. The school has hesitated in recognising its own high quality, judging itself to be good because some areas, such as assessment and the standards of children's spoken language, are rightly identified as ongoing developments. However, it actually provides exceptionally good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase opportunities for the children to talk by ensuring they practise familiar phrases and converse more confidently about their tasks.
- Extend assessments to take account of the national expectations for children of this age.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The children's achievement is outstanding. Most start in the nursery with much poorer standards than are typical for their age, with few of them speaking in sentences. By the time they leave nursery most are still below the average expected for children entering Reception classes, except in using a computer and in physical development. In these areas they match average expectations. However, almost all children meet the very challenging expectations the school sets for them, particularly in their numeracy, art work and personal, social and emotional development. Children achieve extremely well in communication, language and literacy, extending their vocabulary and ability to communicate verbally. Even though the school pays strong and effective attention to improving children's speaking and listening, more opportunities are needed for them to talk. The few children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as the others. Their needs are identified early and outside assistance is frequently sought to advise staff and provide support. Children who show an early gift for some aspect of their learning are supported carefully and so reach the higher levels that are appropriate for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This area is outstanding. The children thoroughly enjoy being at school and the older ones particularly have learned to make thoughtful decisions about their work. They all concentrate on their chosen activities for long periods of time. During the sharply focused teaching sessions children listen closely to the staff but most offer few comments, even when prompted. A few children monopolise sessions, which sometimes discourages those who are less confident. The children settle exceptionally quickly when they move to the nursery, partly because more and more move directly from the toddler care available on site. Children understand how they are expected to behave and immediately cope with any different expectations. The children from the extended care facility integrate seamlessly into the nursery as many are attenders at the other nursery session. All children behave exceptionally well but their immaturity becomes evident when small problems occur. One three year old, for example, who tumbled over whilst embraced fondly by his friend, blamed his friend for the bump on his head without understanding it was an accident.

Children respond very well to the messages about healthy lifestyles. When consulted by the school, for example, they identified the raw fruit and vegetables they preferred for their snacks. Visits to the local area help them understand they are part of a wider community. Exciting topics centred on worldwide religious festivals, such as the Chinese New Year, teach them about different cultures. Attendance remains below average even though the school uses numerous effective strategies to encourage improvement.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall with several outstanding features. In an excellent music session, for example, the teacher ensured the older children understood how to respond to a conductor and how to play their percussion instruments together. They listened extremely attentively and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the activity. In a mathematics assessment activity, four year olds gathered round to discuss work directed at one individual. They enjoyed the challenge of the tasks and were encouraged to think about the answers and strengthen their own learning. Staff extend the children's vocabulary using a range of innovative strategies. Frequently however, children still say very little despite encouragement. Rather than providing opportunities for children to talk about their own interests adults sometimes ask too many questions that confuse some children.

All the children are assessed regularly as they move through steps designed to match their capabilities. The assessments are also used to show how quickly children make progress. As yet they do not clarify children's standards against what is typical nationally, so staff are unclear as to whether or not children reach average expectations. Activities are planned with attention to earlier assessments so that tasks stretch children

and support their different abilities. Staff encourage children to explore very high quality free choice activities. They give children excellent opportunities to use unusual or difficult resources, such as hammers and nails, which are handled enthusiastically but with evident care.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum provided for the children is outstanding. Exciting activities provide a wide and fascinating choice helping children make extremely rapid progress. In the creative area, for example, free access to such resources as paint, glue, collage materials and sticky tape, encourages the children to experiment. One girl ripped cotton fabric to make sheets for the tiny bed she had constructed and attached them firmly with masking tape. The outdoor area is particularly well designed. Climbing nets and frames encourage scrambling and swinging and the children extend indoor learning by playing games based on teaching sessions. Work on the fire service, for example, led to children positioning and climbing short ladders in their outdoor activities whilst others 'attended to the fire'. The children take frequent walks around the immediate area to become more aware of their environment. Recent visits to the town hall enabled children to see older buildings, which they compared with new ones.

All staff ensure that tasks support personal development, as well as focusing on areas of learning; for example, they expect children to take responsibility for tidying up their own painting equipment. The very effective curriculum for personal, social and emotional development reflects the hard work and effort the school has invested, resulting in a calm and caring community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding level of care. Staff know the children extremely well and immediately identify and support any child who looks unsure or unhappy. Children are highly valued and treated with great consideration. They trust and like the adults they work with, and although many children are immature, they feel confident and secure in classes and outdoors. The school works very effectively with outside agencies to ensure children receive any additional support they may need. Parents are offered help in managing difficulties such as bad behaviour, and various classes for adults are provided to strengthen the links between home and school. Senior staff receive training in child protection, and arrangements to ensure the school is a safe place for its learners are most effective. Assessments of children's progress and standards make sure staff identify what children need to learn next in order to speed their learning. Outstandingly thoughtful notes of children's personal development record their well-being alongside their standards. These provide a very clear picture of these young learners' development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's exceptionally clear vision of how to move the school forward underpins all areas and has resulted in impressive developments. The school has expanded, through its own efforts, to offer full childcare. The expanded provision serves the community extremely well and is linked to broader opportunities for parents to extend their own learning. The headteacher has particularly high expectations of how the children should be treated. These place children's personal development and well-being alongside achievement as a constant focus for all learners. The headteacher and deputy head form a very strong team, providing excellent teaching models to the rest of the staff. Their very strong grip on the curriculum, for example, contributes most effectively to ensuring that children achieve so well.

The governors make a very effective contribution to the school. They strongly support and monitor the work of the school. They readily contribute their professional skills to help the school's projects reach successful conclusions. They manage a complex budget particularly effectively and work to improve staff skills in computer technology.

The headteacher knows exactly what is going on in the school and what needs attention. Sometimes the school undersells itself by judging itself too harshly. For example, it reported quality to be less than outstanding because some areas, such as assessment and the standards of children's spoken language, are identified as ongoing developments. Evaluations to maintain and improve the children's learning have been far reaching and have resulted in children experiencing, for example, excellent curriculum opportunities. The school is flourishing and has an excellent capacity for further improvement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	NA
Learners are educated about sexual health	NA
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your help when I visited your school earlier this month. I enjoyed talking with you about your work and finding out about the things you like doing.

I found that your school is an especially good one, mostly because your headteacher is brilliant at spotting how to make things better. Your teachers work very hard and are particularly good at helping you learn quickly, and they provide lots of exciting things for you to play with. Whilst you are at school you are very good. You get on together extremely well and are kind and friendly towards each other, you seem to thoroughly enjoy all the things you do.

I have asked your headteacher and governors to keep up their good work and to carry on helping you learn, by encouraging you to explain and talk more about what you are doing. Your teachers check to see what you have learned but they need to see how well you are learning compared with other children of the same age.

I hope you carry on enjoying school and helping your teachers make Grace Owen Nursery School a lovely place to learn.