



Guildford Children's Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 133731
Local Authority Surrey
Inspection number 282352
Inspection dates 3–4 October 2006
Reporting inspector Nicola Davies

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Hazel Avenue
School category	Maintained		Bellfields
Age range of pupils	3–5		Guildford GU1 1NR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01483 566589
Number on roll (school)	151	Fax number	01483 302150
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ms Sallie Barker
		Headteacher	Mrs Elaine McCrimmon (Head of Centre)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group 3–5	Inspection dates 3–4 October 2006	Inspection number 282352
-------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. A Childcare Inspector carried out an inspection of the day care at the same time.

Description of the school

This twin site children's centre was created in 2002. It combines a town centre location, York Road, Guildford, GU1 4DU (tel. 01483 561652) and one to the north of Guildford in Hazel Avenue. The northern site is in an area of social deprivation and moved to its present site in 2004. The centre provides education and care for children from three months to five years alongside other support, services and opportunities for parents and families. This inspection focused on the provision for three to five year olds. Most children who attend the Nursery are of White British heritage but the number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds is increasing. This includes a growing number of children at an early stage in learning English as an additional language. This is the centre's first inspection and the new head of centre took up her post in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The centre provides good quality education which enables children of all abilities and backgrounds to achieve well. Parents speak highly of the hard work and enthusiasm of the staff who they say 'help to make our children happy and successful.' These attributes underpin the children's good achievement in all areas of learning. By the time they leave for their next school, most children are working at standards in advance of those expected for their age.

One of the reasons why teaching and learning are good is that staff plan thoroughly, taking account of individual's needs and this means that children with learning difficulties and the more able achieve well. Much guidance is given, but on some occasions, this is overdone and opportunities for children to respond fully to questions are lost. Because staff provide high levels of care and support, boys and girls make significant gains in their personal, social and emotional development. These qualities also contribute to children's success in other areas of learning. Right from the start children are encouraged to be independent and to make choices about their work. It is obvious from the happy way they come in and settle to tasks that they enjoy learning. The key person scheme contributes much to the good relationships within the centre and as one parent said, 'The activities, like cooking, prepare children very well for every side of life.' The outstanding curriculum enthuses the children and they take delight in trying out the rich opportunities to explore and investigate.

All of these successes have been achieved through a time of rapid change when leadership and management have successfully drawn together a wide range of services on two sites and established an atmosphere where parents feel confident that their children are well educated and cared for. Self evaluation is satisfactory and presents an accurate picture of the provision. The new head of centre has made a good start in improving monitoring. However, the role of the governing body is not clearly defined and long term plans lack sharp criteria for leaders and managers to measure the centre's success.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen up the centre's plans so they include well defined priorities which governors and senior staff use to monitor and evaluate the provision.
- Improve adults' skills in questioning children to extend their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most children start at the centre with levels of skill and knowledge which are broadly typical for their age. There is a wide spread of ability, and one of the centre's successes is in meeting these diverse needs. Children with learning difficulties make good gains in their learning. They benefit from well focused support and timely intervention by staff so that they can take a full part in all of the centre's activities. Another success

is the progress made by more able children who attain levels in all aspects of their work which are well in advance of those expected for their age. Girls and boys, children from minority ethnic backgrounds and those at an early stage of learning English also achieve well.

By the time they leave most are working at levels which are above those expected for their age. Standards in physical, personal, social and emotional development and knowledge and understanding of the world are especially good; the children make very good progress in working together and making decisions about their own learning. They love practical work and become competent in using hammers, saws and drills while working with wood. Achievement in mathematical development and communication, language and literacy is good. The centre is developing the way it sets 'targets' for children in their individual portfolios.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They enjoy coming to the centre and feel safe and secure. This helps even the youngest children to settle quickly and concentrate well on their activities. They develop the confidence to try out new activities and are often able to explain their learning to adults. Children form good relationships, especially within their 'family' groups. They enjoy sharing their learning with others and most listen and respond well in small group times. Children manage their personal needs and feelings well. They have an excellent understanding of eating healthily and enjoying physical exercise. An example is their enthusiastic response to the 'healthy cafand;eacute;' where they try out new and different fruit and vegetables. They are helpful to other children and adults. At lunchtimes, children help others at their tables, explain what unfamiliar foods are like or give advice on 'scraping the plates' and tidying up. As parents note, their children's growing maturity and confidence in learning gives them a 'great start' to their future education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff understand the different needs of the children and plan work which is matched to their abilities. Sessions include a rich variety of activities and resources which stimulate and extend learning. Children thrive on these opportunities and become excited and highly motivated learners. Staff set challenges which are just within the children's reach and this extends their skills effectively. They keep a check on the children's progress through regular observations and are always on hand to encourage and support. This is especially the case for those with learning difficulties.

There is a good balance in the teaching between allowing the children to choose and guiding them to activities. Adults involve themselves well in activities and this promotes good learning but they do not use questions consistently to extend children's thinking. The group times when staff promote reading and number skills are especially effective when teachers use of a range of voices, toys and equipment to hold the children's interest.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Children bounce enthusiastically into school with the eager anticipation of making the most of the day. As one parent said, 'My child loves the activities so much that he is upset on Saturdays when the centre is closed.' Practical and well planned activities promote meaningful and fun-filled learning both inside and outdoors. The excellent opportunities to explore the natural world and develop physical skills through challenging play contribute much to the children's academic and personal and social development. Everyone is included and those with learning difficulties receive individual attention and support so that they thrive. The contribution of children from minority ethnic backgrounds is valued and their cultures are celebrated. When one Sri Lankan boy brought his collection of traditional masks the teacher capitalised on the opportunity and consequently the children learned much about valuing the richness and diversity of the world around them. The curriculum, which includes very sociable meal times, promotes children's understanding of health and enhances their relationships with adult and their peers. Links with other schools, agencies and the wider community contribute well to the children's experiences and have a beneficial impact on learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for the children. Sensitive arrangements to introduce new children to the setting ensure that children settle quickly and happily. Good relationships with parents and close liaison with a wide range of agencies means that potential difficulties or particular needs are identified effectively and quickly. Parents overwhelmingly recognise the high quality of care and support provided. These strengths combined with good monitoring of individual children's additional learning and language needs ensure that extra support is quickly put in place to enable children to achieve well. Staff keep good records of children's progress alongside colourful portfolios which they share with children and their parents. They use these portfolios to make clear what children's 'next steps' are, although not equally across the different areas of learning. The high quality range of services available is used very effectively to provide a 'one-stop shop' to support vulnerable children and families. Procedures to keep children safe are good and staff carefully assess any potential risks.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The way in which the centre has been developed in recent years, the consistency achieved in teaching and learning and the high quality of care are clear indications that the impact of leadership and management is good. Staff are a good team who show substantial commitment to meeting the needs of all. Leadership of the provision for those with learning difficulties is very effective and results in good achievement. Good management systems have ensured high quality care and children's good personal, social and emotional development. Senior staff have focused much on establishing a common ethos throughout and have won the hearts and minds of parents who are fulsome in their praise. One said, 'Every one of the staff is fantastic with the children and they all know what to do to help them to learn.'

Governors are at an early stage in their role in keeping a check on the centre's standards and provision. There is a lack of precision in long term planning and in identifying the centre's next priorities and these gaps make it difficult to keep a check on how well it is doing. However, based on its solid track record in providing well for its children the indicators are that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so kind and helpful when we visited you. Your families are very pleased you are so happy at Nursery. Talking to you and watching what you do helped us to see why.

- You love all the different things you can do
- You all help each other
- Everyone looks after you well
- You learn to do things for yourself
- You learn something new every day

We have asked the nursery to write down exactly what they want to do next. This will help them show everyone how well they are doing. We have also asked them to ask you more questions to help you learn even better.

It was lovely to spend some time with you and see all the exciting things you do.

Thank you

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector