

Batford Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117068
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	290708
Inspection date	20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Cosway

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Emma Bresslaw
Headteacher	Ms Madelaine Lee
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2001
School address	Holcroft Road Harpenden Hertfordshire AL5 5BQ
Telephone number	01582 713872
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Age group	3-4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Batford Nursery School is an average-sized nursery with separate day care provision. The day care provision is on the same site and, at many times of the day, there is planned movement and integration of children and staff between the day care setting and the school. The Nursery is the Lead Agency for a Children's Centre, which is under construction on the site and will provide a wide range of extended services to families in the area. The school population represents a mix of social backgrounds, but is mainly white British. Attainment on entry is above that normally expected of three-year-olds. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is close to the national average but there are no pupils at the early stages of learning to use English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is slightly below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school judges itself to be outstanding, and the inspection confirms this. Almost all parents are delighted with the quality of education provided. Many wrote in praise of the school when they completed the parents' questionnaire. Typical comments include, 'We have nothing but praise for the school' and 'Our child really enjoys school and has learned so much.'

The curriculum is outstanding, offering a wide range of stimulating activities for children that enable them to learn happily through play. The opportunities to learn through enjoying the excellent facilities in the school grounds are a particular feature of the school and children commented on how much they loved working and playing outside. Teaching is excellent, with adults working closely with small groups of children and extending their understanding through excellent conversation and questioning. As a result, children's achievement is outstanding. They join the nursery with standards that are generally close to or above those expected for children of their age and leave it with well above average standards. The individual profiles for each child provide excellent records of their progress. The nursery's system for tracking children's progress is applied very rigorously. Children are not graded as having reached the next level in the six areas of learning until they have fully mastered all the separate criteria and are totally confident. This does not fully reflect the significant progress that individuals make. This is an indication of the nursery's high expectations of itself and its children, but it does not enable it to make valid comparisons of its effectiveness compared with other nursery settings.

The children are very happy, learning through enjoyment. Behaviour is excellent and the children relate very well to adults and each other. They learn how to be safe, to make sensible decisions and to be responsible. They know how to be healthy and contribute very well to the nursery and wider community. They are well prepared for their future economic well-being and looking forward to going to their next school. Staff have an excellent understanding of how this age group learns, and modify activities very well to meet the children's individual interest and needs. The nursery is a very caring environment and the support, care and guidance are outstanding.

The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The very experienced headteacher has made many changes that have significantly improved provision since the time of the last report. The nursery is taking a central role in the development of child care in the local community as a result of her dedicated and reflective leadership. Parents comment especially on the improved facilities. The resources and the curriculum have broadened, helping to make the children grow in independence, and there have been continued improvements in teaching. Staff and governors are fully involved in school improvement planning and together form a very strong team, which gives the school an excellent capacity for further improvement. It gives outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop records of children's progress so that they reflect their achievements during their time in this nursery relative to children in other nurseries.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children start nursery with a range of abilities, but most are slightly above the expectations for their age. Their achievement during their time in the nursery is excellent and many reach

standards well above those expected for their age by the time they leave, because the arrangements to help them settle quickly and happily into the school are excellent. The stimulating and enjoyable activities make learning a delight. However, the criteria for assessing progress are being applied so strictly by the school that the true extent of the progress children make is not always fully recognised.

Children make excellent gains in developing their communication skills. Their speaking and listening skills are developed very well through continuous conversations with adults, who extend and challenge them so that they reach high standards. Most can talk confidently to adults and the development of early reading and writing skills is very good. They learn to enjoy creative opportunities and can design, cut, draw and colour to a high standard. The progress that they make in their personal and social development is outstanding. They make excellent progress in mathematics. Their achievement in physical development and in knowledge and understanding of the world is also excellent. Children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve outstandingly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and wellbeing of the pupils are outstanding, because of the high quality of care and attention each child receives. Children enjoy school and arrive cheerfully. New children settle in very quickly because relationships are so strong. Their behaviour is usually outstanding and they co-operate very well in small group activities. They show excellent self-discipline and are responsible and careful when using resources that could hurt others, such as scissors and physical education equipment. They play together well and soon resolve any conflicts or problems. Each child has a key worker and the children know that there is someone they can turn to in school if in difficulty. Attendance is good.

The children develop a sense of self-worth because the adults are so quick to respond to their suggestions or ideas. They lead healthy lives and know how to keep themselves safe. This aspect of the school's work is outstanding. They enjoy the opportunities to prepare food and eat healthily and love the many physical activities. They make a good contribution to the school community by, for example, taking responsibility for getting the resources they need and tidying them away. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. They acquire team skills very well through class activities and outside play activities and get a very good grounding in information and communication technology (ICT), literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The teaching of communication and language, mathematical development, personal and social development, physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world is of a high quality because of the wide range of stimulating and exciting activities planned for children and the teachers' excellent use of resources. The opportunities planned for children's creative development are also outstanding and result in art and design work of a high quality. The ways in which all adults talk to children, engaging them in meaningful conversation about what they are doing and about their feelings, are key strengths. Children are constantly challenged, but in such a pleasant, informal way that they are also constantly encouraged.

The activities that teachers plan for children are always interesting and stimulating, encouraging them to take part and enjoy learning. They use a wide range of resources to enhance the children's experiences and to make learning real. They assess individual children's progress regularly and keep good records. Good use is made of ICT to help children to learn. A lesson on mini beasts using pictures on an interactive white board as well as live examples was a good instance of this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school organises lessons and activities that ensure that pupils learn through enjoyment and play, as well as stimulating teacher-led activities. As a result, the curriculum meets the needs of all very well indeed. The school is organised around three large indoor teaching areas, which are very well equipped. For example, the creative room has an excellent range of resources for constructing and painting. The children and their key workers move from area to area through the session, ensuring that the children benefit from a rounded and stimulating range of activities that covers the whole early years' curriculum. The quality of the resources is outstanding, not least the outside adventure play areas, which are a delight.

Healthy, safe and community-minded living is consistently promoted in lessons and school life. The excellent promotion of personal, social and health education results in sensible and responsible pupils. The school provides a good range of visits and visitors: this broadens pupils' education and further develops their social skills. Pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties and those who fall behind are given appropriate activities to meet their needs and help them to catch up.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding care that the school provides underpins the children's learning and makes a major contribution to their personal development. The needs of those who are vulnerable or who have difficulties with their learning or behaviour are carefully identified and provided for. They receive excellent support in several ways from experienced support staff. Productive links with a wide range of agencies support children with learning difficulties and many of these make outstanding progress as a result. All children feel well looked-after and valued members of the school community. They are all known well by all adults who work there, and teachers work very effectively to maintain good, supportive contacts with their families, who praise the very caring staff.

The school's procedures for managing behaviour are very effective. The regular assessment of the children's achievements, carried out as they take part in activities, is of a high standard and the children's individual records are good. The school meets all safeguarding requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The nursery is going through a period of rapid change as it moves to accommodate a children's centre for the local community. Leadership and management are outstanding, backed by an effective governing body, which is both challenging and supportive. The key to why the centre provides a high quality education and meets the needs of the community so well is the

inspirational leadership of the very experienced headteacher. She manages and leads the workforce with sensitivity, wisdom and skill. Her leadership has provided the vision that has taken them forward, whilst her care for every individual has ensured that the staff has bonded into a supportive and reflective team. Almost all parents are very pleased with the way that the school is led and recognise that they have a voice in the way that is managed. The headteacher recognises that the school's desire to be rigorous in the ways that it applies assessment criteria has made it difficult to compare the progress that children make in this school with schools elsewhere, and that teachers need more training in assessment. However, within the school current assessment systems are thorough and work well.

The improvements since the last inspection, for example in the outdoor environment and the in the quality of teaching, have been excellent and so the school is extremely well placed to continue to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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

20th June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Batford Nursey School, Harpenden, AL5 5BQ.

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school. You all told me that you love your school. I was impressed with how helpful and kind you are to each other, so that the school feels like one large family. I really enjoyed the lessons that I shared with you and I saw how well you work together. You were excellent at the Incy Wincy Spider game! These are some more of the things I liked about your outstanding school:

- Your behaviour is excellent and you work hard.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lives.
- Your teachers find really exciting things for you to do.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and all adults care for you very well indeed.
- You have lots of interesting things to do outside in the wonderful grounds.

I have asked your school try to make things even better. The most important thing is:

- When teachers write down how well you are doing, not to expect you to be perfect at everything before they move you up a level!

Make the most of your time at this lovely school!

Paul Cosway

Lead Inspector