

Whitegate Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119096
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	291317
Inspection date	17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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	3-4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Greenwood
Headteacher	Mrs Gill Bell
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2002
School address	Victoria Road Padiham Burnley Lancashire BB12 8TG
Telephone number	01282 772283
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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

The nursery school building has recently been re-furbished and extended to include a Children's Centre which shares the same management team. The nursery offers part-time places for children from three to four years. Extended services such as the breakfast or lunch club, together with day care, are offered additionally at the Centre. Families also benefit from the multi-agency links available, such as those from the health or social services. The nursery serves an almost exclusively white urban community, close to Burnley. When they start at age three, children's attainment is below that typical for the age group. A small number of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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 nursery school that provides excellent value for money. The judgement is better than the school's cautious self-evaluation which was completed part way through this first year in the new setting, when some developments were still on-going. Parents commend the school highly and say it has an excellent reputation. They especially commend the standard of care, the quality of teaching and the rapid progress that their children make. Because the nursery is an integral part of the Children's Centre, staff are able to take full advantage of the wide range of specialist agencies available. As a result, the needs of children and families are met extremely well.

Progress is excellent across the six areas of learning. When children start nursery, their development varies widely; it is below that usually seen and a significant proportion of them have difficulties with social and language skills. By the end of the year, many children are achieving more than normally found at their age. Their understanding of numbers and their skills in communication and using computers are exceptionally well developed. Over the year, children achieve a broad foundation of skills and knowledge on which to build their future education. They learn extremely well because teaching and the curriculum are outstanding. Tasks are based on accurate assessments of what the children know. They are focused at different levels of difficulty, according to what they need to learn next. An exciting, and constantly changing, range of activities encourages children to explore their world and become independent learners. Progress in creative and physical development, and in understanding the world around them, is excellent because adults skilfully guide children in their choice of activity to ensure a balance of experiences at a good level of challenge.

The arrangements for greeting parents and children at the start of sessions and for the secure 'hand-over' at the end are excellent and encourage constant communication. Together with the loan of books and resources and the sharing of each individual's learning targets, these opportunities help parents to be active partners in their children's education. Children are very well informed about healthy living; they take advantage of opportunities for exercise in the outdoor classroom and eat 'healthy snacks'. Personal development is a major strength. Children share and cooperate exceptionally well for their age; they thoroughly enjoy their learning and are prepared to persevere with tasks. This prepares them very well for their future education and results in a very pleasant, busy and purposeful nursery atmosphere.

Improvement since the previous inspection is excellent. The few recommendations of the previous report have been fully resolved. The outstanding and visionary leadership of the headteacher has succeeded in developing the scope of the nursery's work through integrating education, social and health services within the Children's Centre. Attention to safety issues, including checking on the suitability of staff and helpers, is meticulous. There is excellent capacity for the school to maintain this outstanding record and to enjoy continued success in the face of challenges that may arise.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

When they join the nursery, children's development is generally below that usually seen for the age group, although it varies widely between individuals. Some have significant difficulties with social and communication skills. Progress is excellent for both boys and girls and attainment is above average for their age in all areas of learning by the time children transfer to their Reception classes. In personal, social and emotional development, children make exceptional progress because this area is seen as a priority and is integrated into all sessions. Consequently, children's attitudes to learning are excellent and this enables them to succeed in the challenging work that their teachers set for them. Children make a good start in early reading and writing and communicate confidently. Their understanding of number is well advanced for this age group. They develop excellent skills of independent learning as they investigate, explore and ask their own questions. Physical and creative development progresses at a good pace because children have imaginative role-play areas and an exciting selection of activities to encourage exercise and dexterity. Children with learning difficulties are very well supported by staff and outside agencies; they make exceptional progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, are emphasised through all the school's work and are outstanding. Children thoroughly enjoy coming to nursery; this is evident in their broad smiles and the exceptionally confident way in which they leave their parents and carers on arrival. They follow the routines well, consider their choice of activity carefully and sustain very good concentration. Children show very good care and consideration for each other. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and apologise sincerely when they think they have been 'unkind'. They show great enjoyment in their work and are thrilled when they 'discover' new things. Attendance is good.

Children are securely cocooned within this very safe environment. They wear safety helmets when riding tricycles and understand why sun hats are important. Knowledge and understanding of road safety are instilled through the outdoor roadway, complete with markings, road signs and traffic lights. Children know very well what constitutes healthy eating and enjoy varied and constant opportunities for physical exercise using the climbing frames, wheeled toys and other outdoor activities. They plant secure foundations for their future economic well-being through a broad range of learning experiences and the good development of personal skills, such as collaboration and communication. Children develop a good sense of community awareness through theme work, such as 'people who help us' and through collecting for charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and excellent expertise; they know how young children learn best and couch challenging tasks into exciting 'play' activities. During the inspection, some excellent work on mathematical understanding and coordination was seen in the huge sand hut where children dug 'deeper' holes, made 'higher' mounds and found out how to use the controls of their excavating machine. Parents describe

the staff as 'happy and hardworking' and value the way that teachers integrate them into the learning process. This is extremely well done through courses and written information, the sharing of children's targets and the loan of books and resources, together with formal and informal discussions.

Staff observe and assess children's learning constantly. The information is then used to set work at different levels of difficulty; this promotes learning at a fast rate. Adults lead short, focused tasks to teach specific skills and then provide a varied selection of activities where children can practise and consolidate what they learn. These activities are frequently changed and enhanced to provide extra challenge where it is needed. Adults constantly engage with children, questioning and encouraging discussion. The provision for children who have complex needs is outstanding and they take part in the full range of activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and packed with opportunities for children to investigate and find things out for themselves.

Activities are well organised into different areas with children encouraged to choose a balance of tasks, for example, those of a 'creative', 'quiet' or 'active' nature. Together with a range of visits and visitors, this ensures that they have a wealth of experiences to develop all their skills and talents and to expand their horizons. Resources are very carefully chosen and arranged to capture children's interests and fire their curiosity. For example the large, electronic whiteboard is set at a low height so children can learn how to explore and control programs.

Parents are encouraged to enrich their children's learning by using the excellent selection of 'story sacks' which are organised into different levels of difficulty. They include books, with associated games and toys, to help children understand and retell the story or to learn something new.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care and protection for children are seen as paramount and are outstanding. Parents commend the standard of care and say that 'nothing is too much trouble for the staff'. Key workers are allocated to small groups of children so they get to know them and their families exceptionally well. This, in turn, generates a great deal of trust between home and school and facilitates the sharing of information. Staff visit children in their homes before they start nursery as part of the very good 'settling in' arrangements. Some staff work in both the day care and nursery settings so children moving from one to the other have some continuity. Good links with schools ensure that the transition into full-time education goes smoothly. Child protection procedures are in place and checks on the suitability of staff are thorough.

The purpose of tasks is explained and children are encouraged to review and celebrate their own success, often during snack or 'talktime'. Each child's progress is reported twice annually in interviews with parents who are also very well informed about what their children are learning so they can help at home.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is held in high esteem by staff, governors and parents. She is instrumental in maintaining the good caring ethos shared by all adults. Very strong teamwork and a shared vision of excellence underpin the school's success.

The school reviews its performance regularly and uses the detailed information on children's progress in order to do so. Managers and staff know where the strengths lie and act quickly where a need for improvement is identified. The system works well; the considerable range of strengths reported at the time of the previous inspection are still evident and, because of continuous development work, the nursery now excels in its purpose of educating young children.

The strong sense of pride in school is reflected in the high quality of the learning environment, very efficient administration and good maintenance. The governors support the headteacher extremely well and are actively involved in aspects of school life. They are very well known to parents and help to maintain the excellent communications.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

18 May 2007

Dear Children,

Inspection of Whitegate Nursery School, Lancashire, BB12 8TG

I enjoyed coming to your outstanding nursery. Thank you for showing me all the exciting things you do. I really like the way you all stay so busy, are very happy and get on with each other so well. Your teachers plan different things for you to do from day to day and that keeps you interested. You love to dig and build in your sand hut and you have lots of fun making music.

I think you are doing really well with all your learning. I like the way you play in the pirate ship and make up little stories. I met two fierce pirates looking for treasure in your garden. They told me afterwards that they weren't real so please do not worry. You are very good at using the computer keyboard and mouse and you play lots of games that help you learn about matching, reading and numbers. Your parents told me lots about the nursery. They like the way that you are learning so many important things that will help you when you start 'big school'. They said you also enjoy learning at home, especially using the story sacks you borrow each week. What good workers you are! Well done!

Thank you for those lovely smiles you gave me and for letting me join in with your games and activities. Keep up the hard work and good luck for the future. I hope that you all enjoy going to 'big school' as much as the nursery.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector