

# Douglas Valley Children's Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106398
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	309114
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sonja Oyen HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	97
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Lesley Brothwood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Catherine Ardern
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Turner Street Off Greenough Street Wigan Lancashire WN1 3SU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 322473
<b>Fax number</b>	0

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. HMI evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: children's progress and achievement, particularly in spoken language, early reading and writing and number; the impact of teaching upon the children's learning; the use of the outdoors; and the systems to determine how well the Nursery does and where it needs to improve. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, the school's assessment and tracking systems, photographs of nursery life, other documents and questionnaires returned by parents. HMI observed adult led and child chosen activities, and held discussions with the headteacher, staff, the chair of governors, parents and a representative from the local authority. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but HMI found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The Nursery has been a children's centre since 2006, having been an Early Excellence Centre for four years. The Children's Centre provides full day-care for babies and children up to the age of four, nursery education for three- and four-year-olds and out of school care for children aged three to 11 years. It also offers family courses, has links with Health and Social Services and acts as a conference and training venue. As the Nursery is close to the centre of Wigan, families from a wide area, and from diverse social and economic circumstances, draw on its services. The Nursery has places for 52 children in the morning and afternoon sessions. Of the 95 children currently attending, 58 attend both the morning and afternoon sessions at least once a week. Twenty children started in the Nursery the week of the inspection. Ten children are at early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. Six children have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including speech and language and autistic spectrum disorder.

The headteacher and chair of governors were appointed in the autumn term 2007.

This inspection is of the nursery education for three and four year olds. The report from the inspection of day-care in September 2006 is available on the Ofsted website.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Douglas Valley is a good Nursery. It has sustained most of the strengths identified in the last inspection and is well poised to develop further under the clear leadership of the new headteacher and management team. The Nursery is a happy, friendly place well worthy of the praise heaped on it by parents. Typical comments include: 'My child has come on leaps and bounds.', 'My child has grown in confidence.' and 'I could not have wished for a better start to my child's education'.

Children make good progress because the teaching and curriculum are good. The nursery staff understand how young children learn and are skilled in gaining the children's interest, deflecting their concerns and listening to their ideas. Less experienced staff benefit from being part of a skilled team. As a result, there is a high level of consistency in how the adults manage and interact with the children. All the adults are quick to praise and to celebrate small steps in progress with the children, other staff and parents. This creates a very positive, 'can do' atmosphere where children feel at ease. It was difficult to pick out those who had recently started in Nursery, as they participated so well in the activities.

The strong, successful emphasis on developing the children's personal, social and emotional skills underlies the work of the whole centre. Continuity of practice and the high expectations of staff are reflected in the children's impeccable behaviour. Boys and girls get on very well with each other, are keenly interested in new activities and concentrate for long periods. The older children sat very still while listening attentively to a story and younger children were totally absorbed in looking through pieces of coloured cellophane and telling each other about it. There was a marked air of excitement when everyone had to work out from the adults' clues which child was the special person of the day. While the children show a high level of independence in dealing with personal needs, such as deciding when to have snack and in making their own choice of activity, they are also very willing to work with an adult on a particular task. The sessions run very smoothly and calmly. The children know the routines, where things are kept and what they are expected to do. They happily helped to tidy away before the music stopped, needed little reminding to wash their hands after going to the bathroom and were quick to put on their coats as they knew it was cold outside. Such behaviour contributed to Douglas Valley's recent success in becoming the first nursery setting in Wigan to gain Healthy School status.

Key facets of the good teaching are detailed planning and the adults' skills in questioning the children and making them think. A good example was when groups of children used a range of materials outdoors to create a journey. The teacher was very effective in getting the children to solve problems, such as how to make sure the ship was big enough for all, and in prompting them to find what they needed. The staff also make good use of time with the children to observe and note what they say and do. However, the adults place little emphasis on sharing the purpose of activities with the children or to reviewing with them how well each has done and what could be better next time. Parents value highly the photographs, samples of work and comments that detail their child's progress through nursery and, for a good number, right from their time in the baby and toddler rooms. Parents also appreciate the way staff seek them out to discuss how well children are doing and how to help them. Several said that they really welcome the activities suggested in the newsletters.

When the children leave the Nursery, they are well prepared for primary school. Most are at the level expected for their age and a significant number do better in social maturity and physical skills. They develop good skills in counting and an awareness of shape and size through games, songs and activities. For example, two boys re-arranged several wooden blocks so that they fitted neatly onto the shelves. The children make steady gains in knowledge of the world around them through a wide range of interesting activities indoors and out. Good examples are the tasting of exotic fruits, being part of a Chinese lion dance and weaving different fabrics. In reading and writing, progress is slower. Building on their success last year in boosting learning, nursery staff are again working closely with groups of boys and also groups of children who have begun to recognise letters and their sounds. The inclusion of resources, such as clipboards and big sheets of paper pinned to the walls, encourages all children to have a go at writing as part of play. Some of the children write their names unaided and all recognise their name, but there is little to prompt them to read or to support them when they choose to write.

Children who speak English as an additional language, make good progress in learning to understand and speak English because of the good interaction between children and adults, and also the repetition of words and phrases in daily routines. The high level of care and concern for every child is well shown in the conscientious support for children with particular learning needs. These children make good progress in meeting their targets as a result of close cooperation between nursery staff and specialist personnel who provide detailed guidance and training.

In the short time she has been in post the headteacher has updated policies, ensured that all required safeguarding procedures are in place and introduced systems to check the quality of what the Nursery offers. Performance reviews and regular meetings have given all members of staff a voice in looking at the work of the centre and what they can offer. As a result, there is a shared commitment to improvement, although some talents and expertise remain untapped. All the staff are behind the development of courses for families, the setting up of a base for health services and an access point for other services in the borough. The headteacher and chair of governors have an accurate and realistic picture of the Nursery's effectiveness. Given that many management systems are in the early stages of use, they rightly judged the quality of governance and school leadership to be satisfactory. There are clear strengths in the headteacher's vision for the centre, her management of people and awareness of the priorities for action. Although the current improvement plan for the centre lacks specific content on how the Nursery provision can be improved and how it will benefit the children, the Nursery is well placed to strengthen the quality of provision.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

As a nursery school, the Foundation Stage is completely covered by the Overall Effectiveness section.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Share the purpose of activities with the children, help them to review how well they have done and identify what they might do next time.
- Ensure that displays and activities include examples of print to support children in reading and writing.
- Embed systems to check the quality of provision and use the information gained to make the most of expertise within the Nursery to improve the quality further.

- Ensure that specific outcomes for children lead improvement planning.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	3
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 making me so welcome when I came to see how well you are learning. Like you, I enjoyed my day. Your mummies and daddies told me that life at Douglas Valley is really good and I can see why! You do lots of interesting things - I bet it was fun looking for the Easter eggs hidden outside. All of you are superstars in sitting still, looking after yourselves and tidying away. You are so clever in finding your names, listening to stories, singing and counting. Some of you are also brilliant at football and swinging along the monkey bars.

To help you learn even more, I have asked the adults to talk with you about what you have learnt and what you might do next. I have asked for more things for you to read and to help you write. I have also asked Mrs Ardern to use what she knows about life in the Nursery to decide exactly what could be better and how it can be best done. Now is the time for you and all the adults to share good ideas.