

Strong Close Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107185
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	309338
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Lesley Clark

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin Gallagher
Headteacher	Ms Julie Groves
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	Airedale Road Keighley West Yorkshire BD21 4LW
Telephone number	01535 605272
Fax number	01535 692556

Age group	3–5
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Strong Close Nursery School is close to Keighley town centre but takes children from a much wider area. It provides a nursery for over 15 schools. It has an 18 part-time place resource provision for children with additional needs. The proportion of children with significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than usual. Half the children who attend are from ethnic minority heritages, including Mirpuri Pakistani and other Pakistani backgrounds as well as mixed White backgrounds. Of the children who attend Strong Close Nursery, 36% are at an early stage of learning English, most of whom speak Punjabi or Urdu at home; 3% are in the care of the local authority, and a larger proportion than usual is vulnerable. The deputy headteacher is currently acting headteacher. Her teaching post and two nursery nurse positions are covered by temporary or long-term staff.

The school was designated as a children's centre in 2006 and full day-care provision opened in July 2007 and was inspected separately in April 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which is much loved by children and their parents. It is well led and managed. Outstanding governance ensures continuing good provision, despite staffing difficulties, and a high level of involvement by parents and carers. Children thoroughly enjoy coming here as shown in their good attendance and excellent behaviour. The nursery buzzes with activity and laughter as children play and chatter together, relishing the space both indoors and outdoors. Parents and carers are delighted with the care and support their children receive and many wrote to say so. They especially like 'the staff who are very approachable and understanding' and the way their 'children grow in confidence'. The school has many outstanding features but also has some areas where it could improve further. It gives good value for money and has good capacity to continue to improve.

The nursery's main strength is the outstanding curriculum which promotes care and respect for each other and all living things. This enables children to experience an extremely wide range of interesting, thought-provoking and highly enjoyable activities. Provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding and they make excellent progress as a result. Children develop into curious learners because there is so much for them to do and to find out for themselves. A key feature is the way activities are planned to develop many different skills at once, no matter what children choose to do. For example, when children made cardboard binoculars they used skills in creative and physical development to make them but also mathematical and communication skills as they used them, commenting on size and shape and trying to find words to tell others what they could see. A strong feature of the curriculum is the emphasis on sensory experiences which brings learning alive and develops children's sense of wonder. Outdoor provision is outstanding and used very effectively to promote all aspects of children's learning.

Children achieve well. From below average starting points they leave the nursery working securely within the level expected of their age. They make the best progress in their personal, social and emotional development because this is the area where they are taught best. Staff take every opportunity to help children to be kind to each other and to share. Staff are skilled at working with small groups and individual children for just the right amount of time to ensure that they learn specific skills without becoming restless. Consequently, children begin to concentrate for longer stretches of time and make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good with notable strengths in the way staff play with children and encourage them to try new things. This develops children's confidence well and helps them to learn happily. The observations that staff make of children's progress, however, vary in quality. Some record children's experiences rather than stating what they can do and so are less useful as a precise record of children's development. Vulnerable children, looked-after children and those learning English as an additional language learn well, for staff are very attentive to their needs and always ensure that they are fully included in all activities.

Good leadership and management ensure that the organisation of staffing and the continuous provision contribute effectively to children's learning. However, the checking of teaching quality and its impact on children's learning is less effective. This means that the quality of adult interactions with children to promote their learning varies considerably. For example, while some staff question very effectively, using signs and gestures to promote more communication, others miss opportunities to ask questions or repeat words to develop children's language and

communication skills. This means that learning experiences are not always as rich as they should be.

The school's strong commitment to caring for children as individuals shows in the efforts made by staff to ensure that children's varying needs are understood and provided for. Consequently, children feel safe and receive excellent support whenever they need it. This is why they are confident, happy learners whose personal development is outstanding. They understand that it is important to eat healthy foods and to run around energetically. They take very good care of each other, attentive to the needs of those who have disabilities, playing safely yet exuberantly. Everyone gets on extremely well together and people's differences are accepted as a matter of course. Children are extremely well prepared for their future lives.

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

- Improve the quality of teachers' observations of children's learning so that the records of the observations show precisely what children can do.
- Ensure that systems to check the quality of teaching give clear points for development so that all adults promote children's learning, especially their communication and language skills, equally well.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children, including those who are new learners of English, who are looked-after children or vulnerable, achieve well. Children who stay at the nursery for five or six terms achieve consistently better than those who only attend for two or three terms. From below average starting points children make good progress and reach standards that are at the expected level for their age. Their skills are particularly strong in personal, social and emotional development. This is because provision is carefully matched to children's developing needs as they grow in confidence and maturity. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of excellent provision for their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children are busy, happy, confident young people with lots of energy and enthusiasm. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included and make similarly independent choices as others. Children are well used to choosing activities and organising themselves. They take responsibility readily such as helping to sweep up the sand or clear away toys after they have finished using them. They know to post their names into the box after they have helped themselves to a healthy snack and a drink, and they enjoy being sociable. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, resulting in children's happy acceptance of each other's different needs and capabilities. There are no instances of racism and bullying; children are far too absorbed in enjoying and sharing exciting activities with their friends.

Children are kind to each other, helping smaller children to carry large objects, for example, without being asked.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Children learn well because adults plan interesting activities that excite their curiosity. Adults are skilled at playing with children and using role play to extend their learning. This helps children to become sociable, competent learners, especially those who are vulnerable. Children learn at the right rate for their developmental stage because they largely choose what they do, supported discreetly by adults. Sometimes adults do not question sufficiently well and so miss opportunities to develop children's language and communication skills. When adults question effectively and use signs and gestures to help them explain what they mean, children learn more rapidly. The quality of the observations that adults make on children's progress varies, with the best reflecting clearly what children can do and others commenting more on the activities. This means that some records of achievement give a clearer picture of children's progress than others.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

This is a strength of the nursery, with all areas of learning exceptionally well provided for both indoors and outdoors so children can freely access everything regardless of the weather. Every day, an enormous range of activities is on offer to all children such as watching eggs hatching, building large structures or acting out an imaginary play in a toy theatre constructed from boxes and curtaining. Activities are exceptionally well planned to incorporate several areas of learning at once and to ensure that learning is purposeful and enjoyable. For example, the take-away pizza stall involved children making, selling and delivering cardboard pizzas on bikes which they had labelled and numbered to match numbered parking lots. The result is outstanding personal development and good achievement in all areas of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Adults take extremely good care of all children. Safeguarding fully meets current government requirements. Provision for learners with disabilities and/or disabilities or complex learning needs is outstanding. Staff ensure that the children have full access to a wide range of activities which are carefully planned to suit their individual needs within a safe and supportive framework. It is a similar picture for other groups of children too, including those learning English as an additional language and those who are looked after or vulnerable. Simple systems are used extremely effectively to give a clear overview of children's progress in each area of learning each term. Different activities are planned each week based on what children know and understand and are ready to learn next. As a result, children thrive, especially in their personal development, because they are extremely well known by all the adults who take care of them and because their needs and interests come first.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The main strengths of leadership and management are the organisation and the simple systems which are used to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the nursery and children's good progress. Area leaders are closely involved in setting action plans, contributing to an excellent curriculum. The management team has children's interests firmly at heart and promotes equality of opportunity and lack of discrimination exceptionally well. The school accurately identifies its strengths and areas for development but its self-evaluation is cautious in some respects because it does not measure the impact of its actions sufficiently well on children's progress. The monitoring of teaching and learning is good in terms of indicating improvements to curricular provision but less good at pointing out where teaching should be more effective. Outstanding governance provides stability, energy and drive, supporting the school through the many building works and staffing changes to incorporate a children's centre. Governors know the school extremely well, ask searching questions and keep a close check on curricular provision. The result is a thriving, popular nursery where parents and carers as well as their children feel fully included.

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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?	1
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 ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	1

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?	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	1
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	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

Inspection of Strong Close Nursery School, Keighley, BD21 4LW

I really enjoyed meeting you and watching you play. I came to look at what you do at nursery. You clearly have a lot of fun. I especially like the way you are all friends together. Your parents and carers think so too. You go to a good nursery. This is what your nursery does best.

- The curriculum (the activities you choose to do both inside and outside) is outstanding.
- The adults look after you and take extremely good care of you.
- You turn into happy, confident young people.
- You really enjoy learning and finding things out for yourselves.
- You have a lot of fun because your nursery is very well organised.

I have asked the adults to do two things to make your nursery even better.

- When adults watch you I have asked them to write down exactly what you do so that this will tell them how well you are learning.
- I have asked your headteacher to check how adults help you to learn so that everyone gives you as much help as possible, especially to learn new words.

I wish you all the very best for the future and hope you continue to enjoy learning.