

Harewood Centre Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108134
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	309597
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Jane Hughes

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Jack Curshaw
Headteacher	Mrs C Harling
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2003
School address	Harewood Avenue Pontefract West Yorkshire WF8 2ER
Telephone number	01977 722835
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional inspector.

Description of the school

This small nursery school draws children from an area of mixed socio-economic circumstances. Children attend on a part-time basis. Almost all children are of White British heritage and speak English at home. An increasingly large proportion of children has learning difficulties and/or disabilities; particularly speech and language problems. The school offers extended provision in the form of a daily playgroup, toddler group and a Peers Early Education Project (PEEP) group, to support parents and carers in their role as first educators of children. There have also been periods of significant staff absence due to illness over the past 18 months.

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. Parents remark that, 'The staff go out of their way to make the children feel individual and valued.' This is partly because the school maintains outstanding partnerships with an array of external support agencies: these provide children with the very best levels of support whatever their individual need. The headteacher has overseen huge changes to the school. As well as ensuring that the school continues to improve, she instigates a vision of success and offers very good support to staff during times of considerable turbulence. The local community holds the school in high regard and parents show unremitting loyalty to the school and staff. The headteacher works well with the classteacher who provides good levels of support in terms of leadership and management. Together, they plan how to develop the school's provision so that children's learning continues to accelerate and standards rise. However, there is no formal programme to monitor the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and so, although usually good, some activities lack the required pace and challenge. As in many nursery schools, the make up of the governing body changes rapidly. A few experienced governors provide continuity and all offer unwavering support to the headteacher. The school has an accurate view of its own effectiveness along with key areas to develop. The school continues to make identifiable progress in all its priority areas and shows good capacity to improve, particularly now staffing is stable.

The cheery, secure and welcoming environment entices children to make the most of their time here. Children's personal development and well-being is strong because staff encourage this at every turn. Children show increasing levels of respect for each other and are aware that other people have needs too. First class pastoral care and personal support, coupled with good levels of academic guidance, enable children to make clear strides in all areas of their learning, especially in their personal, social and emotional development. Some show an impressive degree of perseverance, especially when they are supported by patient and enabling adults. This is an important quality for future success. The good quality of teaching and learning ensures there is a consistently strong focus on children developing their own skills independently whenever possible, both indoors and outside. When the quality of some activities dips, it is because the adults do not exact such high standards from the children and the pace of children's learning slows as a consequence.

Children achieve well. Each intake is now very small and increasing numbers of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children join the school with skills at just about the expected levels for their age, except for their speaking and listening skills, which are not always as well developed. These speech and language difficulties have a significant impact on the progress these children make and present a barrier to their accelerated learning across the whole curriculum. The school works well to address these problems. Children with gifts and talents do well because they are provided with just the right levels of challenge to reach their potential. As a result, some of these children already attain the goals set for five-year-old children before they move on to other schools. Welcoming staff, a stimulating curriculum, both indoors and outside, along with many activities before and after the school day, provide a lively environment where children are keen to attend and parents bring them willingly. Parents learn more about how to help their children at home and in school because they receive useful guidance throughout the year from staff.

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

- Monitor the quality of teaching and learning more formally.
- Improve the pace and challenge offered by some activities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children join the Nursery with a wide range of skills. Although a few have skills above the expected levels for their ages, most arrive with skills at the lower end of those expected for their age. A significant proportion has speech and language difficulties and some receive expert support from outside specialists. As a result children's communication, language and literacy skills are weaker than other areas when they arrive. By the time they leave the school to join Reception classes in up to six different primary schools, children have achieved well. The majority work securely within the levels expected for their age in all of the six areas of learning. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or with particular gifts and talents achieve equally well because the school is very quick to identify their individual needs and put appropriate support programmes in place.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children relish the time they spend here. Parents confirm this with comments such as, 'Our children love attending.' and, 'My child enjoys the whole experience.' Children behave very well because adults insist on this so it becomes second nature. They proudly take the stickers they win for doing something well. First class relationships result in a harmonious learning environment where everyone looks after and respects one another. Children generously clap each other when they do something well and are usually happy to share resources and take turns with equipment. They are developing a firm understanding that fruit and vegetables, milk and water help them to be healthy and exercise keeps them fit. Visitors come to help children learn how to stay safe on the roads. Children also know that their keyworker remains a constant presence in their lives while they are at Nursery. Children's good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps them to becoming caring and more thoughtful citizens. Children's attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. The successful strides children take in their personal development help them to build a firm foundation for future learning and success.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Parents sum up the philosophy of the Nursery with comments like, 'Learning is structured but fun here.' For much of the time, adults have high expectations of what children can achieve and pitch activities at an appropriate level to offer just the right degree of challenge. These activities are well planned, of a good quality and enable children to move on well with their

learning. On occasions, some activities are pitched at too low a level and the pace of children's learning slows at these points during the day. Similarly, when an adult's role is more supervisory than developmental, then children do not draw as much learning from an activity. The headteacher and classteacher together provide excellent models for other staff of what constitutes good and better classroom practice. All adults are particularly good at developing children's independence. Staff meet the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities very well. They plan for specific support, individual learning programmes and call on outside expertise to support the work of the school's own staff.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The practically based curriculum grabs children's interest and fires their curiosity. Thoughtful development of the indoor environment means that children's learning is supported with an impressive range of resources. For example, the purpose built kitchen area has low-level work surfaces so that children may bake in comfort and assimilate important life skills concerning healthy eating at the same time. Children enjoy school because the rich curriculum constantly extends children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Well established community links mean children draw on the expertise provided by a large number of adults and this lends variety to what they do. Even so, staff recognise they could do still more learning out and about in the locality. Staff encourage children to work inside and outdoors and children circulate independently. The bright and well resourced extension means children can develop their physical and other skills under cover when it is wet outside.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school ensures that parents are partners in this important first stage of their children's education. Parents visit school with their children prior to their start date, so they become used to the environment. Many attend on site playgroups and the PEEP group as part of the school's successful extended provision and these help children to settle in quickly. Much admired 'Special Books' provide treasured memories for parents and children of their time at school as well as a clear record of their many achievements. All the appropriate health and safeguarding arrangements are in place. Meticulous assessments document children's progress and enable key workers to identify accurately who needs what level of help and when. As a result, children thrive and make the progress of which they are capable. Even so, initial assessments are only recorded once children have been in school for several weeks and this inflates their skills on entry. There is high quality support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so they make good progress through school. Excellent partnerships with outside support agencies ensure that all children receive high quality care and guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has overcome significant problems during her three years here. Prolonged staff absences have made continuity difficult. The recent halving of the school's roll, coupled with the enforced staffing reduction, have been an unavoidable distraction for the school's leadership. Even so, the headteacher provides strong direction for the school. The small staff team is mutually supportive. This is key as many responsibilities have changed recently. Systems

to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are informal and some staff do not have a clear enough understanding of areas to improve within their practice. The governing body is now securely established. Governors are fully committed to the school and provide help to the headteacher in terms of children's well-being and in how smoothly the school runs. They do not yet fully involve themselves with the school's academic performance nor do they evaluate the impact of their own contributions.

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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	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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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

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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for showing me all the fun things you do at Nursery. I wrote a story about my visit. I hope you like it.

There is a little nursery school in Pontefract. The children smile all day there. Can you guess why they smile all day? Yes, that is right. They smile all day because they are happy.

They are happy because:

- everyone looks after them very well and is very kind
- they learn lots of new things - like how to catch a big ball or to write the letter 'n'
- they learn to do things for themselves and to find answers to different problems. These are clever children!
- the walls and tables are covered with their beautiful work - like the wooden aeroplanes they made, covered in sparkly sequins and soft, soft feathers
- there are lots of things for mums and dads to do too! They say they like coming here as much as the children.

Have you guessed which school I am writing about?

Yes, of course, it is your school!

Even good schools, like your school, can do some things even better. Your teachers are going to make sure that when they show you something new to do, it is always tricky enough to make you think even harder! And they will check that this happens.

I hope the bulbs you planted look beautiful in the spring.