

Highters Heath Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103134
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323764
Inspection date	2 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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 (total)	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sandra Langston
Headteacher	Deborah Bateman
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2006
School address	11 School Road Warstock Birmingham B14 4BH
Telephone number	01214 742356
Fax number	01214 742356

Age group	3–4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school provides 52 full-time places. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals is well above average. The percentage of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Increasing numbers of children are starting school with delayed speech and language development. Most children are from White British backgrounds, though the number of children from minority ethnic groups is showing an upward trend. The school achieved the Quality Mark in Basic Skills in 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. It offers a stimulating and very friendly setting in which to learn and play. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school. Two parental comments are typical of many, 'This nursery is a real credit to the community and I will be sending the rest of my children there so they can enjoy the same benefits.' and 'The staff are friendly and welcoming and parents are encouraged to be involved with the nursery and their children through workshops. I would recommend Highters Heath Nursery to anyone seeking a nursery in this area.'

Children make good progress because of consistently good quality teaching and learning. As a result, by the time they leave, they work securely within the levels expected for their age across all areas of learning. This represents good achievement from their skill levels on starting school. Children have positive attitudes and show great enjoyment in their learning. Staff have a good awareness of the needs of children of this age and plan effectively to meet their individual skills and abilities. Much thought is put into providing activities that build upon children's own interests. As a result, children are fully engaged and maintain their concentration for lengthy periods. Relationships at all levels are excellent and this makes a significant contribution to children's learning and development.

The good leadership of the headteacher has been central to the improvements made since the last inspection. She has overseen a variety of initiatives that have raised achievement and improved leadership and management, and teaching and learning, from satisfactory to good. These all demonstrate a good capacity for further improvement. Staff are enthusiastic and teamwork is strong. All involved in the life of the school share a commitment in ensuring that each child is cherished as an individual and his or her unique needs are met. The headteacher has, of necessity, taken on much of the responsibility for taking the school forward. She has rightly identified that the time is right to share these responsibilities more equally amongst staff so they play a fuller role in school improvement.

Good personal development means that children are polite and considerate in their dealings with adults and other children. Their behaviour is excellent and they work and play together harmoniously, sharing and taking turns fairly. Children enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance. They listen well for their age because of the emphasis staff place on developing this skill and this helps them to become confident learners. The good curriculum is effectively enlivened by a variety of enrichment activities. These include visits around the local area and opportunities to work with a variety of visitors, such as professional musicians. These activities effectively extend children's personal development and their academic and creative skills. The provision for information and communication technology, in terms of computers and software, is rather outdated. At times, this hinders children using their developing skills in this area to support learning across the curriculum.

Children's welfare is promoted well, and this aspect of the school's work is much appreciated by parents. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding arrangements met statutory requirements. Staff are firmly committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all children while in their care.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the provision in information and communication technology to better support children's learning across the curriculum.
- Share leadership and management responsibilities more equally amongst staff.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter school with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their age. They make good progress and achieve well across all areas of learning. The school has worked hard over the last year to raise the achievement of boys, which was below that of girls. A variety of initiatives was introduced to capture the interest and engage boys more fully in their learning, such as by providing boy oriented projects. These have proved successful and boys now achieve as well as girls. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly the increasing number with delayed speech and language, make good progress because of the well targeted extra support they receive. Children whose first language is other than English also make good progress, because staff expertise meets their individual needs effectively. The good achievement of children in developing literacy and numeracy skills is reflected in the school gaining the Quality Mark in Basic Skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. As a result, they clearly know right from wrong and cooperate well in pairs and small groups. Adults skilfully help children to understand their feelings by talking through difficulties and children soon learn to consider these steps for themselves. They make friendships easily and are thoughtful towards others and, in so doing, make a good contribution to school life. They also contribute well to the wider community by taking part in local events and raising funds for the local children's home. Children's readiness to wash their hands before they eat their healthy snacks and nutritious lunches shows a good understanding of the importance of good hygiene and diet. Physical development is built into most activities, both within the building and in the outdoor areas and, consequently, children become fit and active learners. Children develop a good understanding of how to stay safe through visits from people in the local community, such as police and road safety officers. The way children make good progress in developing social, literacy and numeracy skills means they are well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 2

Well planned learning experiences, within all areas of learning, are provided through challenging, enjoyable activities. These activities are effectively matched to children's different levels of ability and provide a good balance between those led by staff and activities chosen by children. Staff place strong emphasis on developing children's speech and language skills, as these are low on entry to school. Questioning is used well to develop these skills and children are encouraged to ask questions and comment about their activities. This was evident during an investigation into absorption, when children explored what happens when water is mixed with

packet mashed potato. Children's comments about their observations included, 'It smells like straw' and 'It's sticky and soft.'

Staff are flexible in their approach to children's learning and adept at modifying activities to meet children's current interests. A good example of this is the way a project on feathers arose from a child bringing a feather into school, that she said 'had fallen from a bird in the sky'. Children were seen to be fully engaged in a variety of activities, including mark making with feathers. Ongoing assessments are used effectively by staff to check children's progress and guide them to success in their tasks. Leaders recognise that information and communication technology equipment is currently outdated and therefore does not support children's learning effectively enough. Staff use the outdoor area well to promote children's physical skills and develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. Children particularly enjoy the digging area and the 'potting shed', in which they plant and tend to a variety of plants. The outdoor area is being developed further by the creation of a Forest School area to enable children to have hands-on experience of investigating a natural habitat. The school runs a variety of workshops for parents, to enable them to be effectively involved in their children's learning. Parents appreciate these opportunities and increasing numbers are attending.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 2

The welfare of children is at the heart of the school's work and children thrive in this caring and welcoming setting. Child protection arrangements are rigorous and all staff know the procedures to follow if they have concerns about the well-being of a child. Thorough arrangements relating to all welfare matters, such as administration of medicines and first-aid procedures, are securely in place. Good links with outside agencies ensure well targeted extra support for individual children, when required. This makes a significant contribution to the good progress made by children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, especially those who start school with delayed speech and language. Children with emotional and behavioural difficulties are supported well. Leaders have put into place a nurture group that effectively meets their needs within a caring and sensitive environment. Good links with parents mean they are kept fully informed of the progress their children make. Leaders have plans in hand to further develop relationships with parents to involve them even more effectively in promoting their children's welfare.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Accurate self-evaluation enables priority areas for development to be identified. Leaders then act quickly to bring about improvement. A good example of this is the way boys' achievement has been improved over the last year. The procedures for checking and evaluating children's progress are good and give a clear picture of how individual children are doing. Leaders use the information gained effectively to set challenging targets for improvement. The headteacher rightly acknowledges the need to involve more staff in leadership and management responsibilities. Community cohesion is promoted well and all in school and the local community are treated equally and fairly. Children come from diverse backgrounds and their cultural differences are recognised and celebrated. As a result, children get on well together and there is no evidence of racial intolerance. Children gain an early appreciation of citizenship within

the United Kingdom through national events such as 'Walk to school week' and 'World Book Day'. Governors support the school well and play a full part in influencing its development.

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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 is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do children in the EYFS 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/or disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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 effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?	2

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 July 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Highters Heath Nursery School, Warstock, B14 4BH

Thank you for the really friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many exciting things you do. Your school is good and it helps you do well in your learning.

What we found about your school

- It is a very friendly and happy place in which to work and play.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are polite and kind to others.
- Adults look after you well and make sure you are safe.
- You show a great deal of enjoyment in coming to school and are keen to learn.
- You are good at making choices and trying things out for yourselves.
- Adults in charge of the school are working hard to make further improvements and help you do even better.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Provide you with up to date computers to help you do even better in your learning.
- Help more adults to be involved in running the school.

You can help your school improve further by continuing to try your best in all you do. All of you are a credit to your school and your parents.

Yours faithfully

Melvyn Hemmings

Lead inspector