

Guildford Children's Centre

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 133731 |
| Local Authority | Surrey |
| Inspection number | 341407 |
| Inspection dates | 17–18 September 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Natalia Power |

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

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|--|--|
| Type of school | Children's centre |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3–5 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 151 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Sonya Hinton |
| Headteacher | Mrs Elaine McCrimmon |
| Date of previous school inspection | 3 October 2006 |
| School address | Hazel Avenue Bellfields Guildford GU1 1NR |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed the open-plan provision on each site for a total of around four hours, and held meetings with governors, staff, parents and local authority representatives. They talked with the children, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's tracking of children's progress, the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, curriculum planning and the 24 questionnaires submitted by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of learning for all children and their progress
- the effectiveness of the governing body in supporting the school and holding it to account
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in monitoring the quality of teaching across the split site.

Information about the school

The school forms the major part of the Guildford Children's Centre, which provides a wide range of services for children from birth to five and for their parents, all managed by the governing body. The inspection focused on the provision for three to five-year-olds. Nearly all of these children are in the Nursery and transfer to a wide range of local schools for the Reception Year. The school is larger than most nurseries, and is divided between two sites, two miles apart, one to the north of Guildford in Hazel Avenue, Bellfields, Guildford, GU1 1NR, and the other in a town centre location in York Road, Guildford, GU1 4DU. Most children are from White British backgrounds and a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds are also represented. A few children are at an early stage of learning English. A very small minority of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a good quality of education for the children. It cares for them exceptionally well. Parents particularly value the personal attention that each child receives. One commented, 'All staff really engage with the children and treat them individually and with respect.' The extremely high quality of care and support is the result of careful planning by leaders and managers to ensure that children are familiar with the adults who will be teaching and caring for them. Children are prepared very well for entry into the school, and adults visit families to ensure that the children's needs are fully met. An excellent feature is the way families are welcomed into the school to help settle children into their new routines.

Leaders and managers promote equality well by ensuring that all groups of children make good progress and have access to good teaching. Through careful planning and effective liaison they ensure that the needs of children on both sites are met well. As a result, there is evenness of provision across the two sites. Each is laid out attractively with areas designed to stimulate learning. Each is well resourced and there is a good proportion of adults to children. The outdoor play areas are different in scale, but each is thoughtfully planned to enable children to learn about nature and develop good physical skills out of doors. However, there are too few computers for the numbers of children, and this restricts their opportunities to learn about the world through technology.

In this safe and secure environment children from all backgrounds learn well through play. There is a good balance between activities that children choose for themselves and those which adults encourage them to try. Children's enjoyment of learning is seen in their confidence and willingness to try new experiences. They learn well and make good progress, attaining communication, language and number skills which are generally above those levels expected for three-year-olds. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English are given close attention and excellent support, enabling them to make progress in line with other groups of children. The school's tracking of the progress of individual children ensures that learning is tailored, wherever possible, to their individual needs.

Through regular monitoring and self-evaluation, leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are ambitious for their school and want to move teaching from good overall to outstanding. They recognise that their monitoring of classroom practice is not always sharply enough focused on how children are learning. Moreover, leaders and managers, after lesson observations, do not always make sufficiently clear to teachers how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They ensure that safeguarding procedures are

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robust.

The school has a good capacity to sustain further improvement, as seen in the way it has successfully tackled areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. For example, the quality of planning by leaders and governors has improved, and teachers now use questioning successfully to stimulate children's vocabulary and extend their learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To move teaching from good to outstanding, sharpen up the monitoring of teaching and learning by:
- ensuring that observations focus on the quality of children's learning
- giving all staff clear and continuing feedback to enable them to understand how well they are doing.
- Ensure that children have full access to a wide range of information and communication technology resources to help them gain a better understanding of the world beyond the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**2**

The good effect that the school has on the children is summed up by one parent, who commented, 'My son used to be a very shy and quiet little boy, but since he has been here he is turning into a confident and outgoing little boy.' In activities observed around the school, children were seen to have good relationships with the adults and, as a result, they learn well in a calm environment. During an outdoor session the children developed good physical skills from such activities as riding tricycles and building wooden castles. They demonstrated their enjoyment of the provision when participating in a wide range of activities. As a result they make good progress in acquiring new skills. In another session the children developed good language and creative skills when reading quietly with an adult and later when studying sunflowers in the garden. Overall most children attain good standards in language, number and communication skills, and all groups of children make good progress towards the early learning goals. However, children are not always given enough challenge to enable them to make outstanding progress. For example, children role-playing as firemen enjoyed the activity, but were insufficiently challenged with questions to help them develop more fully their understanding of what firemen do.

Children from all backgrounds play well together. They behave well and are ready to share and take turns. This good behaviour, together with the attentiveness of the adults, ensures their safety. They show a good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet through helping to prepare fruit for themselves and others in the 'snack bar'. They also practise good hygiene, learning to wash their hands thoroughly before cutting up the fruit, and this helps to keep them safe. The school caters well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The children learn to celebrate values and traditions of others, for instance by learning about the Hindu festival of Diwali and

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making diva pots. When the time comes for the children to move to the next stage of their education in a wide variety of schools, they are well prepared through effective transition arrangements.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 2 |
| Taking into account: Children's attainment ¹ | 2 |
| The quality of children's learning and their progress | 2 |
| The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 2 |
| The extent to which children feel safe | 2 |
| Children's behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |
| Taking into account: Children's attendance ¹ | 2 |
| The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

Children quickly settle into the school because of the exemplary care they receive from all the adults. As an example, one little girl who was finding it difficult to settle on her first day was taken for a nature walk and quickly became absorbed in learning. A special feature of the school is the way the children are organised into 'family groups' with two key workers allocated to each group, so that the children get to know them and have the confidence to turn to them if they have any concerns.

Adults use a variety of opportunities to extend the quality of children's learning by providing them with a wide range of experiences. For example, children learned to tell the difference between a grapefruit and an orange by thinking about colour and by using the senses of taste and smell. The adults develop children's vocabulary well

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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through questions designed to make them use a greater variety of language. For example, one child with learning difficulties was encouraged to develop good language skills by talking about the pictures in his portfolio. These portfolios are also a valuable assessment tool, because children take great pride in them and see in pictures and words how much progress they are making. The adults' use of questioning, although effective, does not always stimulate children sufficiently to result in outstanding learning. The curriculum is enhanced by a good programme of trips to places of interest, together with visits from drama groups and outside speakers. However, there are too few computers, and this restricts children's opportunities to learn new skills and to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|---|----------|
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 2 |
| | 2 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 2 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 1 |

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers handle well the complex provision across two sites, working and planning effectively together. There is a common sense of purpose among all the adults, with equal opportunity and the needs of the children being paramount. Leaders and managers share a clear vision to move the school forwards and make it a beacon for nursery provision. This vision has been effectively shared with staff and all have a commitment to improvement.

They recognise that not enough is being done to move teaching from good overall to outstanding. They regularly monitor the quality of teaching on each site and this ensures that it is consistently good. Their observations, however, focus more on the quality of teaching than on the children's learning, and teachers are not always fully informed about what they need to do to improve, or given a clear timescale for improvement.

Leaders and managers have an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's strengths and what still needs to be done. Since the last inspection they have improved tracking procedures, so that groups of children with similar needs, such as more able children, can be given extra help. The governing body has grown in strength since the last inspection and supports the school well. The school listens to parents and takes their views into account. It works in exemplary partnership with an impressive range of external agencies, including health providers, local religious organisations, a nearby school catering for pupils with severe learning difficulties, and with a local supermarket which provides visiting speakers to teach children about healthy eating. The school

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offers a wide range of children's services reaching out to the local community, and makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion. As yet, school leaders do not sufficiently evaluate the considerable work being done within the community, but plans are in hand to improve the rigour of its evaluation of these activities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who returned questionnaires or who spoke to the inspection team are very happy with the school. They comment that their children enjoy school and feel safe. They feel that the school has a warm, friendly atmosphere and that their children make good progress. Inspectors fully endorse these views. A small minority commented that they would like to see better communication between home and school. The school is reviewing these arrangements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Guildford Children's Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 151 children registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 19 | 79 | 4 | 17 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 20 | 83 | 3 | 13 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 13 | 54 | 10 | 42 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 14 | 58 | 9 | 38 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 16 | 67 | 8 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 13 | 54 | 10 | 42 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 15 | 62 | 9 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 14 | 58 | 9 | 38 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 13 | 54 | 10 | 42 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 14 | 58 | 9 | 38 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 13 | 54 | 8 | 33 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 4 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 12 | 50 | 11 | 46 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 16 | 67 | 8 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|--------------|---|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its children's needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves |

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 39 | 58 | 3 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 13 | 50 | 33 | 4 |
| Secondary schools | 17 | 40 | 34 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 18 | 43 | 37 | 2 |
| Special schools | 26 | 54 | 18 | 2 |
| Pupil referral units | 7 | 55 | 30 | 7 |
| All schools | 15 | 49 | 32 | 5 |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a child in their learning and development. |
| Attainment: | in other phases of school, for example primary schools, attainment is the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. However, there is no national average for three- and four-year-olds. Therefore, in inspections of nursery schools, inspectors take account of expectations in the age-related bands of the Early Years Foundation Stage. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school. |
| Learning: | how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners. |
| Overall effectiveness: | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| Progress: | the rate at which children are learning in nursery sessions and over longer periods of time. |

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



21 September 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Guildford Children's Centre, Guildford, GU1 1NR

We very much enjoyed meeting you all when we visited your school recently. It was lovely to see how well you get on with one another. You take turns and wait patiently while another child uses toys or equipment that interests you. You help the other children politely, for example when you cut up fruit and hand it round.

Yours is a good school, and you are lucky to go to one where all the adults look after you so very well. We came to your school at the very start of the year and we saw how quickly you settle in. This is because all the adults care for you extremely well. They work closely with your parents and carers to help you become confident, cheerful children. They know that happy children enjoy their learning and make good progress, and this is what happens at your school. It was lovely to see how you choose your activities sensibly, and how you also take advice from the adults. You use the indoor and outdoor areas of the school really well to learn new and exciting skills.

Those in charge keep a close watch on how well you are doing, and this helps them prepare work for you that helps you learn and make good progress. You share in your learning by looking through your portfolios, and taking great pride in them. One thing we noticed is that many of you love using computers and want to use them to learn all about the world around you. We have asked your school to give as many of you as possible a chance to do this. The adults want your school to be even better than it already is, and we have asked them to keep an even closer watch on how well you are learning. In turn, you can all do your bit, no matter how young you are. Listen carefully to the adults, and go on being as helpful as you can to one another, and I am confident your school will go on getting better and better.

Yours faithfully

Natalia Power

Lead inspector

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