

Atherstone Early Years Centre

Inspection report

Unique reference number	125484
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	381079
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2012
Lead inspector	Nina Bee

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cheryl Harrold
Headteacher	Ann Clay
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2009
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Age group	3–5
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Introduction

Inspection team

Nina Bee

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 11 parts of sessions taught by two teachers and the four senior early years educators and two early years teaching assistants who support them. Discussions were held with staff, children, three representatives from the governing body and a small number of parents and carers. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. She observed the school's work, and looked at academic performance data, safeguarding documentation, teachers' planning and the school development plan. Responses to questionnaires from 14 parents and carers were analysed, along with nine from staff.

Information about the school

This is a 100-place nursery situated in the Atherstone Early Years Centre which provides a broad range of services and support for adults and children from birth to five years. In April 2011, the centre entered into a formal collaboration with Stockingford Early Years Centre and, currently, the head of centre leads both centres. This arrangement is due for review in August 2012. Most children come from White British backgrounds with 6% of children coming from minority ethnic groups. A few children have been identified as having disabilities or special educational needs. Very few children have English as an additional language. The nursery operates two sessions each day, but all children attend for one full day each week. Since the previous inspection, there has been a high turnover of staff including the head of centre who was appointed in April 2011.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good nursery which enables all children to get off to a good start and achieve well in most areas of learning. The development of children’s personal and social skills is outstanding.
- Teaching is consistently good. Relationships and the way adults interact with children and manage behaviour are outstanding. Adults plan exciting activities because they have a good understanding of how children learn.
- When children stay for the day, planning and teaching are not as well focused during the afternoon sessions as they are in the morning.
- Behaviour is outstanding because all adults have high expectations and consistently teach children how to behave in different situations.
- Procedures for keeping children safe are outstanding. All staff and governors focus strongly in all they do, to ensure that no child comes to any harm.
- The head of centre has an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the nursery. She has gained the confidence of the parents and carers, worked productively with governors and staff and formed a clear and comprehensive improvement plan. Teamwork is excellent and staff morale is very high.
- The way the governing body supports and challenges the work of the school has improved since the previous inspection and is now good.
- Staff acknowledge that the system which identifies the levels children are on when they enter nursery, the progress they make while in the nursery and the levels they reach by the time they leave does not give them a clear enough picture of how well children achieve.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This results in all children respecting and getting on extremely well with each other and the adults who help them. Children have good opportunities to develop their understanding of the different beliefs and cultures around the world.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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

- Improve the way staff collect data to record and then track children's progress so that they gain a clear picture of:
 - the levels at which children enter nursery
 - the progress they make during the time they spend in nursery
 - the levels they reach when they leave.
- Improve the quality of planning and teaching for those children who stay all day so that they do not repeat activities during the afternoon session.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The most recent information on the levels children reach by the end of nursery shows a picture which is generally as expected for their ages. Within this, levels are higher in some areas than others. For example, levels are higher than normally expected in personal, social and emotional development, physical development and creative development. Elements of communication, language and literacy and problem solving, reasoning and number are slightly below those normally expected. However, in relation to their starting points, this represents good achievement for all groups of children. Those parents and carers who returned the questionnaire, and the few who spoke to the inspector, are all pleased with the progress their children are making. Many took the opportunity to write comments stating how their children had gained in confidence, especially in relation to developing personal and social skills since they started nursery. Staff focus effectively on children's individual needs because key workers liaise very well with parents and carers and so know each child extremely well. As a result, the few children identified with disabilities and special educational needs learn effectively. Suitable concentration, with extra resourcing during some activities, enables the very few children who speak English as an additional language to learn as well as the others.

Quality of teaching

Adults generally ensure that sessions are well organised, effectively planned and well resourced. There is a good variety and balance of adult-focused activities and those which children choose themselves. Children are given good opportunities to have an input into the planning. For example, after listening to the story of *The Gruffalo's Child*, the children were asked what activities they would like to do next. Suggestions included making snowmen. Consequently, these suggestions were added to the planning and children were observed thoroughly enjoying themselves as they made snowmen from white dough and decorated them with an assortment of materials. Others made snowmen out of clay after learning about the body parts they would need. Learning was good in both of these well-resourced activities because adults supported individual needs effectively.

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When children stay for the whole day, planning does not ensure that they do not repeat some activities during the afternoon. Both the inside rooms and the very secure and exciting outside area provide a stimulating learning environment and interesting places to learn and play. Teaching is consistently good and, at times, it is outstanding. There are outstanding features which thread through the teaching in all sessions. Relationships between all adults and children, for example, are outstanding. As a result, children quickly develop positive attitudes to learning and much enjoyment is seen as children work and play. All adults interact very skilfully with individuals and groups to reinforce and develop learning. Behaviour management is excellent and, as a result, children quickly learn the importance of how to behave. These features all contribute positively to the good and sometimes outstanding learning which takes place in all areas. For example, after previously making jelly, children were seen thoroughly enjoying themselves as they described what jelly looked like when it was set. When one child said, 'It is not like juice anymore,' adults developed language expertly by encouraging children to use words such as 'liquid'. Mathematical skills and children's cultural awareness were developed effectively as a group of children worked cooperatively to make a collage of an igloo after having a discussion about Eskimos and how people live in cold climates.

Adults plan many opportunities for children to listen to stories and begin to develop a love of reading. Learning is outstanding when these sessions are expertly resourced so children have opportunities to listen, look and take part. All children have daily opportunities to develop an understanding of simple words, when they identify their names as they self-register each day. Higher-attaining children were seen working enthusiastically in a small group as they identified items beginning with 's'. The children were then well supported as they blended sounds together to make simple words such as 'sun'. Good opportunities for children to use pens and pencils enable them to develop confidence when mark making and, for higher-attaining children, to write simple words. All parents who returned questionnaires stated that they feel that their children are taught well. Inspection evidence agrees that they are.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All adults work hard to ensure that children learn very quickly how to behave in different situations. As a result, outstanding behaviour was observed as children worked and played, either outside, in the classrooms or in the area where they eat their lunch. Adults supported the children very effectively. Children responded very positively as they identified the fruits they were eating in this delightful environment which promoted the need to eat healthily and develop good table manners extremely successfully. Although there are clear systems in place to record incidents of poor behaviour, no incidents have been reported in the last few years. Children quickly gain confidence and move around safely because they know that the adults look after them and keep them safe. Responses from questionnaires from parents, carers and staff all agree that behaviour is at least good and they are confident that if there were any issues they would be dealt with effectively.

Leadership and management

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

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The head of centre's skilled and very enthusiastic leadership has been instrumental, in a short amount of time, in creating an ambitious team of staff who are adamant that they are striving for the very best. Her vision to promote equality effectively by ensuring that all groups of children make good progress and have access to at least good-quality teaching has been shared effectively with staff and the governing body. As a result, staff and the governing body are ambitious and have a high commitment to improvement. Nursery development planning is good and focuses well on raising achievement and the levels children reach. Senior staff have correctly identified that the tracking of children's progress has not been rigorous enough in the past. Links with the children's centre staff and the external agencies who are housed at the centre are excellent. The nursery benefits greatly from using the facilities, resources and the expertise that is on hand.

Despite dealing with the recent staff changes, including that of the two teachers and a number of early years educators, the head of centre has focused on maintaining the good quality teaching and learning and successfully developed it further. Teachers' planning has been a focus for development and the good curriculum is exciting, interesting and relevant to children's individual needs and allows them to achieve well. The induction programme is impressive and is responsible for giving parents and carers very clear guidance on what is expected when their children start in the nursery. As a result, children settle in quickly and confidently, attendance is improving, children learn well and develop outstanding behaviour. There is an excellent focus on children's personal, social and emotional development. In addition, children have good opportunities to learn about different beliefs and cultures in the world today. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

A senior teacher has recently been appointed and supports the headteacher effectively. The role of the governing body has been developed well since the previous inspection. Governors have received additional training and are now more involved, for example, in nursery development planning, than they were at the time of the previous inspection. Consequently, they are able to support and challenge the nursery more effectively. There are good procedures in place to tackle any discrimination. In addition, the governing body takes its responsibilities related to health and safety seriously. Children play and learn in a very safe environment both inside and out. Documentation related to safeguarding is excellent. Questionnaires from parents and staff all state that children are well looked after when in the nursery. Inspection evidence shows that safeguarding is outstanding. Recent improvements have been impressive and indicate that there is good capacity for further improvement.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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 pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



13 January 2012

Dear Children

Inspection of Atherstone Early Years Centre, Atherstone, CV9 1JZ

Thank you for making me so welcome when I recently came to inspect your nursery. You go to a good nursery. There are many things that are good, some that are outstanding and one or two that need to be improved.

These are the good things I found out about your nursery.

- You learn well in most areas because teaching is at least good and at times better. Teachers are particularly good at making sure you develop excellent personal and social skills and your behaviour is outstanding.
- You learn lots about how other people around the world live. I saw you have lots of fun learning about Eskimos and what life is like in cold climates.
- Adults plan lots of exciting and interesting activities for you to do and, as you get older, let you give them some ideas on what you want to learn about.
- The head of centre, the staff and the governing body all work very well together to make the nursery a very safe place for you to learn and play. Those who look after you at home agree that this is so.
- Your parents and carers are really pleased with all that the nursery does to help you.

I have asked the nursery to do two things to improve the education you receive.

- Make sure that, from when you start in the nursery until when you leave, your progress is carefully checked.
- Make sure that, when you stay all day, the activities you do in the afternoon are not the same as those you do in the morning.

You too can help by always doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Nina Bee
Lead inspector

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