

Millfields Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104138
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	355529
Inspection dates	10–11 January 2011
Reporting inspector	David Carrington

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 of pupils on the school roll	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Jevons
Headteacher	Mandy Cryan
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2008
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Age group	3–4
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed seven lessons led by one teacher, supported by seven teaching assistants. Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, whole staff and the governors. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school planning, assessment data, records of children's work, the school's checks on the quality of teaching and a number of policy documents. The team received 34 questionnaires from parents and carers and also evaluated those from school staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well planning is focused on developing children's independence, self-esteem and confidence in learning.
- The way children's progress is tracked and how this information is used to ensure all children achieve as well as possible.
- The creation of links with other settings to ensure the children meet others from different backgrounds.

Information about the school

Millfields Nursery School shares its site with Walsall Academy, an 11–18 secondary school. The children come from a fairly wide area around Bloxwich. Nearly all the children are from White British families and speak English as their main language. Very few have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Most children in the Nursery classes attend for half a day, although a few are present for both the morning and afternoon sessions. The school provides childcare for 24 children from birth to three years, wrap-around care for 10 Nursery children and before- and after-school care for 32 children from the Nursery and from a local primary school. Additionally, it has extensive partnerships with other childcare organisations, including Pelsall Children's Centre. These partnerships were not inspected by the team.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Millfields Nursery is an outstanding school. At the centre of its first-class provision is the sterling quality of care, guidance and support. This enables staff to discover, understand and support children's individual needs and provide an education that fully helps them develop all the necessary skills and knowledge for their age. Attainment is better than expected for children of Nursery age and progress is outstanding.

The school has maintained its many strengths since the previous inspection and has improved on a number of fronts. Attendance is now better than expected and the tracking of children's progress is thorough, wide ranging and accurate. It provides powerful data which all staff use exceptionally well to provide activities that assist individual children to make the most of their talents. The children grow in confidence and self-esteem and quickly make friends with a large number of other children. They talk and play very joyfully together and behave superbly. There is very little argument, tears are infrequent and the children are polite and helpful. They very much feel at home in the Nursery and thoroughly enjoy being part of its community.

The headteacher provides a firm direction for staff, based on her high expectations and great professional expertise. The quest for self-improvement is very obvious and the school's participation in an accredited quality assurance scheme has added to the perceptiveness with which leaders and members of the governing body audit the school's effectiveness. Staff work collaboratively and purposefully to ensure the children receive the best possible Early Years Foundation Stage education. Planning is a conspicuous skill amongst staff. In this, they take full account of children's experiences and progress to date in order to provide learning opportunities that will enable children to take the next step in learning. One child was seen happily playing with a train set, making the track longer and longer. This experience was provided because of the awe and enjoyment he had found in the pre-Christmas train ride to see Santa.

Staff and the governing body are not afraid to highlight what needs refinement or improvement. They have full capacity to make future improvements because of their tenacious approach. There is recognition that, whilst the children have every opportunity to benefit from the school community and to contribute to people's lives in the neighbourhood, they do not yet have enough chances to meet children from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The first links have been made with another Nursery to enable the school's promotion of community cohesion to rise from good to outstanding quality.

Provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are substantial strengths. The staff are resourceful, imaginative and adventurous in developing learning experiences that enthuse and motivate the children. This applies in the childcare provision too. The children want to be part of the adventures and investigations that are provided every day. Children with

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some form of barrier to learning enjoy their time at Millfields as much as the high fliers and their progress is equally brisk.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop a partnership with another Nursery school that will enable the children to meet and play with children from different backgrounds.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

When children start in the Nursery their skill and knowledge levels are wide ranging. Overall, the level is lower than expected for three-year-old children. No time is lost in helping the children settle to happy learning. Very quickly most children become quite articulate and develop great confidence and assurance. Staff are expert in ensuring that children develop skills of independent learning so that they are able to make choices and explain the reason for them. The children work and play safely in the knowledge that there is a trusted and friendly adult nearby should they meet with any difficulty. They enjoy the many challenges provided, as seen when they studied a clock face and talked about the time that nursery routines start.

Children who attend in the afternoon are rather younger than those in the morning. Some have not long been in school. Nevertheless, they too are making fast progress. They cheerfully wave goodbye to their parents or carers at the start of the afternoon and are soon engrossed in the many exciting activities that fill their three hours in school. Boys and girls make similar rates of progress in both morning and afternoon sessions. The greatest progress is made in children's personal, social and emotional development and in language and literacy. Until recently, progress was slower, although still good, in their knowledge and understanding of the world and some aspects of mathematical development. Staff have successfully modified provision so that now, progress in these two areas is as rapid as in the others.

Children show amazement and a sense of discovery in many activities. In the Sensory Room they enjoyed experimenting with torches, light sticks and cameras to see what happened when the 'button was clicked'. 'Wow' was a frequent response. Several children and adults were turned into frogs by being spotlighted in a green beam. The enjoyment was increased when their photograph showed a green hue. Another group had fun with vegetables. Their perseverance was excellent as they attempted to slice a carrot with a blunt table knife. They knew mum or dad could do it, so they were going to do it successfully, and safely too. It was apparent they knew why vegetables are good for them and the eagerness to take a milk carton home at the end of the session showed they appreciated why this was a good choice.

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These are the grades for children's outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

The typical session at Millfields includes at least 12 inspiring choices of activity inside and as many outside too. The staff have the skill of being able to develop children's skills across all six areas of learning, regardless of the actual activity. They guide, encourage, explain, model and inform in equal measure. The children enjoy being with the staff and their urge to show, talk about and share their discoveries is commonplace. Inside, a number of children were particularly proud of the models they had made from recycled packaging. One had made a 'l-o-n-g rocket' and another a 'freeze machine'. Both included brightly coloured feathers which other children noticed and adopted for their own models. These became 'tickling feathers' which caused immense enjoyment and much laughter.

Activities outside are just as effective in building children's capabilities. The equipment has been carefully designed to support their learning. Thus, what appears to be a balancing tightrope is there to help children develop upper-arm strength in preparation for early writing. This is done as they hold straps to support themselves as they balance. The development of children's confidence and self-reliance was observed as one child climbed and balanced on large tyres. At first, adult support was essential as this was mastered. Later, and when no-one was thought to be looking, the child clambered up and across the tyres independently and confidently ♦ and with great pleasure and pride in this

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achievement. It is such experiences, based on thorough and ambitious assessment to support learning and lesson planning, that highlight why the curriculum is so rich, rewarding and relevant.

The profound knowledge of why such experience is essential for individual children is due to the exceptionally successful care, guidance and support provided. Childcare provision is based on thorough knowledge of children's individual needs too. It is immediately apparent that the children attending the before- or after-school clubs, for example, are nurtured sensitively and effectively. Very rarely does a child of any age pine for a parent or carer during the day. Staff and children enjoy each other's company and want to do the best for each other. The bond between children and their key worker is exceptionally strong.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Millfields is an organisation that is reflective of its own performance. Staff are aspirational for the children and form a firmly welded team that work in excellent partnership. The recent development of paired working in sessions is an example of the collaboration that unites expectations and derives strength from complementary expertise. The thoroughness of approach to teaching is mirrored in the security of safeguarding procedures. Policies, guidance and training ensure that all adults in school are watchful and that children can learn free of worry or threat.

The governing body takes performance data in its stride when assessing the merits and challenges in school. Its members have experience, knowledge and skills that benefit school leadership through sensitive and supportive probing of school performance. The governing body has done a sterling job in ensuring the use of resources, particularly staffing, brings rewards in terms of children's great achievement. That every child achieves equally well, and mixes in harmony and friendship, is due to the care and concern of the governing body as well as the staff.

The headteacher is steadfast in her leadership. She has cemented partnerships with other schools and organisations to ensure the school can provide the richest experiences for the children. The partnership with a local primary school in tandem with the Royal Shakespeare Theatre is a case in point. This adventurous initiative is enabling the children to relish great literature through drama, art and music. Whilst partnerships are outstanding, the headteacher has identified that more can be achieved in the promotion of

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community cohesion through the development of links with another Nursery, so that the children meet others with different cultural, ethnic and faith backgrounds. At present, however, good work is done to help children understand such diversity through the programme of visitors who share, for example, Indian food and costume with them, and the fun derived from learning about the Chinese New Year of the rabbit.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers hold particularly positive views of the school. They ascribe its success to the hard work and high expectations of staff, the sensitive care, guidance and support provided and the fun and enjoyment their children have in their learning. A common feature of their thoughts is the way staff get to know the children's individual needs and make sure that these are fully catered for. Hardly anyone wrote of concerns. Whilst everyone returning the questionnaire said they receive ample information about how well their children are achieving, one or two would like more details of how different activities supported learning of the necessary skills. The inspection team's judgements match those of the parents. School leaders are determined to extend the information provided for parents and are using the 'Learning Journey' files to do so.

Some parents and carers wrote they could not answer all questions because their children had been in school for a very short time.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 70 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	82	5	15	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	82	6	18	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	24	71	10	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	74	8	24	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	79	6	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	76	6	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	71	8	24	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)	20	59	5	15	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	76	5	15	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	68	7	21	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	74	6	18	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	82	5	15	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	88	3	9	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



12 January 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Millfields Nursery School, Bloxwich WS3 3LU

Thank you for all the smiles and laughter when we came to see you recently. We were thrilled to be with you. You are clearly enjoying your time in school. You are doing very well too. Your school is outstanding.

We will remember the way you showed us how well you are learning. Some of you remembered our names and you were all so well behaved, very polite and helpful.

We hope that the photographs you took of us help you to remember our visit. We have written a report for your parents and carers about the excellent Nursery school you go to. We are sorry it does not have any pictures. Perhaps you could take some and put them on the cover for us.

Your teachers are planning a visit to another Nursery for you. When you go, play with the children there and talk to them about Millfields. Ask them about their school too. We are sure you will make lots of new friends there.

Enjoy making more rockets and freeze machines and cutting up carrots and parsnips. We were glad we could share the fun when you did these things.

Yours sincerely

David Carrington

Lead inspector

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