

Howard Street Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105757
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	355832
Inspection dates	29–30 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Gartside
Headteacher	Ms Lynda Barlow
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight sessions and part sessions, mainly in the Nursery but also in the day-care setting. These were led and supported by 12 teachers, teaching assistants and nursery practitioners. The inspectors held meetings with the chair of governors and members of staff, and talked informally with a number of parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised documentation relating to school management and children's progress. They took into account questionnaires completed by 10 staff and 20 parents and carers.

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

- The progress children make in developing their communication, problem-solving and reasoning skills.
- How effectively the teaching uses assessment to cater for the needs of individuals.
- How great an impact the school's many partnerships have on enhancing the quality of its provision.

Information about the school

The Nursery is much smaller than the average-size school. The families belong to a wide range of different ethnic groups. Around half the families are White British and around one quarter are of Pakistani heritage. Half the children speak English as an additional language and 13 different languages are spoken in the school. Some families are refugees and a small number are seeking asylum. Around 20% of the children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Children attend either in the mornings or in the afternoons for one year prior to moving on to a large number of different primary schools. The school has achieved the Golden Grin award for promoting dental health.

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has taken on the headship of another local nursery with which this school now works in collaboration. She shares her time equally between the two nurseries. The Nursery governing body also runs a 49 place day-care setting. This report covers both the Nursery and the day-care setting.

The Nursery shares its site with a children's centre which did not form part of this inspection and which has not yet been inspected.

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

2

Main findings

This outstanding school is, understandably, held in very high regard by parents and carers. They are full of praise for the excellent levels of care that all staff offer to their children which help them to, 'come on in leaps and bounds' and 'develop much more confidence'. All groups of children make good progress in developing new skills; their progress in communication, problem-solving and numeracy skills is outstanding. Most children's skills on entry to the Nursery are well below those expected for their age, although the attainment of those who have experienced the high-quality provision in the day-care setting, around one quarter of the children, is usually closer to age-related expectations. By the end of the year, children's overall skills are broadly as expected. Their all round personal development is particularly strong and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional.

Children's outstanding behaviour and their generosity of spirit create a very happy, harmonious environment in which those of different ethnicity, ability and experience all thrive. This is because all staff provide excellent role models and employ a great range of strategies to engage children's interest and communicate consistent messages. They use assessment exceptionally well to identify individuals' abilities and needs, and to adapt the high-quality curriculum.

Under the calm, reflective leadership of the headteacher, the school has high ambitions for the children and a strong determination to keep on improving. However, because its self-evaluation processes are not yet sufficiently rigorous, it is over-optimistic in some of its judgements and not stringent enough in ensuring all required policies and practices are up to date. The governing body is highly supportive of the school but less effective in holding it to account. Whilst aware that the attendance of many children is erratic, the school is not as proactive as it could be in its efforts to improve the regularity with which children have the opportunity to benefit from its high-quality provision. For these reasons, and despite some excellent elements to the leadership, the school's capacity to improve is good rather than outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rigour with which the leadership evaluates its practice, by:
 - linking monitoring and improvement planning to the desired impact of actions on outcomes for children
 - ensuring policies and systems fully meet requirements.
- Improve attendance levels, by:
 - increasing the regularity of the monitoring of absence

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- linking absence to individuals' rates of progress
- working even more closely with parents and carers to emphasise the importance of regular attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children greatly enjoy their time at both the Nursery and the day care, and they achieve well. They show this in their happy faces and zest for investigating all the interesting resources. Their parents and carers confirm it through comments such as, 'My child loves Nursery and even asks to go at the weekend.' and 'Since starting at this Nursery my child's concentration, language and social skills have greatly improved.' For many children this is their first experience of separating from family members and communicating in English. They settle very rapidly and develop great trust in the staff so that they usually pay good attention and follow instructions, think hard about questions and suggestions, and develop high levels of independence. Children with communication difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress in this area, alongside their peers, due to highly focussed adult input. Similarly, the school's recent work targeted on problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy has led to improved skills in this area compared to previous years. Children's use of numbers as labels for counting was comfortably within the expectations for their age.

Children understand the fairness of taking turns and form very strong relationships; many show real empathy with others' feelings. One explained that another was showing reluctance to come into a room, 'because he's a little bit shy'. Many naturally make space for others to sit beside them or invite them to, for example, enjoy using tiny shovels to pour glitter and stars through a small funnel. The children show great interest in others' beliefs and cultures. They fully understand that following the school rules will help everyone to keep safe and happy. Children in the day care, including some who spend their day in both settings, enjoy healthy food such as beans, cheese and fruit and are very clear that, should some drop on the floor they need to put it in the bin because, 'it might have germs that could make me ill'. The children delight in playing outside in all weathers, understand the need to wrap up warm and can also appreciate the magic of a rainbow. Most are happy to help with tidying up and they quickly grow to know where different resources belong. Whilst attendance at this young age is not statutory and, therefore, there are no averages, too many children have irregular attendance patterns. This reduces their opportunities for developing new skills and is also not helpful in establishing good routines for when they transfer to primary school.

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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	2
Taking into account: Children's attainment ¹	3
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	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	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	3
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?

Outstanding use of assessment, which begins with discussion about children's likes, dislikes and skills during initial home visits, underpins the high quality of the school's provision. Detailed screening of individuals' understanding and use of language highlights their specific needs. This informs the planning of small group work and also staff's strategies for communication with children throughout the day. These include excellent use of eye contact, signing, puppets and visual communication cards as well as very clear speech. Similarly, increasingly sharp tracking of children's mathematical skills leads to activities that are very well tailored to individual needs. All adults are alert to what is happening in other parts of the indoor and outdoor areas and they are highly skilled at playing alongside children to extend their learning. The great emphasis placed on encouraging children to think for themselves leads to them making sensible decisions. Occasionally, staff miss opportunities to ask open-ended questions or they are too quick to answer questions themselves when talking with children. More usually they take every chance to develop children's knowledge and understanding by covering many areas of learning at any one time. This occurred in an excellent session when the teacher used a small computerised toy to extend children's skills in: problem-solving; communication; fine and gross motor skills, including for a child with physical disabilities; number recognition;

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positional language; and turn taking as well as sheer delight and imagination when the toy left the track and determinedly made its way across the carpet.

The curriculum places great emphasis on the promotion of children's personal, social, communication and mathematical skills but not at the expense of other areas. Staff pay very good attention to children's enthusiasms, for example, spiders or dinosaurs, to inspire their interest. Story-telling sessions in children's home languages enable them to benefit fully when joining in whole group story time. Visits from theatre groups or members of the police and fire services, walks in the park, to the library or local shops and visits to a gym all enrich children's learning and open their eyes to the complexities of and opportunities available within their local community.

High quality care, guidance and support are another great strength that underpins the school's success. All staff demonstrate exceptional sensitivity to children's emotional well-being whilst children's key workers develop detailed knowledge of their family circumstances and developing skills. This enables them to offer timely, highly-effective support. Day care staff explain to the babies when there will be a change of carer and they provide plenty of opportunities for children to experience activities in another room as they grow ready to learn new skills. Nursery staff are already taking opportunities to discuss with the older children what will happen when they transfer to primary school. Based on minute observation and analysis of individuals' difficulties and progress, the support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including the partnership with their parents and carers, is outstanding, enabling them to take full part in all the Nursery has to offer. The school's hard work to promote regular attendance, contacting home on the first day of absence and talking with parents and carers about its importance, has resulted in some improvement since the previous inspection.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of teaching	2
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?

Good quality leadership and management, and a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities ensure that the school runs very smoothly whether the headteacher or the deputy headteacher is 'in charge'. The headteacher's outstanding leadership ensures that a strong sense of purpose and direction permeates the Nursery engendering excellent team work. Increasing delegation and good access to further training mean that more staff are taking on leadership roles which they are carrying out well. The great efforts made to strengthen the liaison between Nursery and day-care staff are proving highly effective. For example, greatly improving assessment procedures ensure that staff support

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individual children equally well in whichever setting they receive their early education. Partnerships with the children's centre and the nursery with which this school collaborates also greatly enhance the provision through the sharing of expertise and training. Close working relationships with health and welfare professionals strengthen the support available to individuals. The very wide range of partnerships, combined with the ethos of the school which all staff adopt wholeheartedly, ensure that it promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination highly effectively.

The leadership is less strong in the rigour with which it evaluates the effectiveness of its actions and identifies weaker areas. Whole school development planning outlines priorities and actions but provides no specific criteria related to improved outcomes for children through which to judge their success. Lesson monitoring helpfully identifies areas of strength and suggestions for improvement but seldom highlights the impact of the teaching on children's learning. The governing body comprises members with very useful expertise and it is highly supportive of the Nursery. It is less successful in fulfilling its role of providing challenge to the school's leadership and ensuring all requirements are fully met and rigorously checked. Thorough checks on adults' suitability to work with children, effective risk assessments and staff's vigilance all help to ensure that the school's safeguarding practice is good although some documentation is not fully up to date. The school promotes community cohesion well locally and makes good use of children's photographs and stories when they return from extended holidays to broaden the awareness of other children of different ways of life. The school is at an early stage in evaluating the impact of such work.

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	3
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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

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Views of parents and carers

All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire and those spoken with expressed wholly positive views about the Nursery. They feel very well informed and supported as partners in their children's education. The provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities received much praise as did the ease of communication with staff. A very small number would like children to take more reading materials home or would prefer them not to play outside in all weather. The inspection findings confirm that the school offers high quality provision.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Howard Street Nursery School 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 48 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	80	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	85	3	15	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	19	95	1	5	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	75	5	25	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	80	4	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	85	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	75	5	25	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)	9	45	8	40	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	80	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	80	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	75	5	25	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	95	1	5	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. 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.



1 December 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Howard Street Nursery School, Rochdale OL12 0PP

I really enjoyed myself when I visited your nursery recently. Thank you very much for chatting with me and helping me to find out about all the exciting things you do.

You told me that you enjoy your time at Nursery and I could see this by the way you all seemed to be smiling most of the time. It was great to see how well you all get on with each other and how hard you try to be helpful. You know a great deal about keeping yourselves safe and healthy – well done!

All the adults are really good at helping you to feel comfortable in Nursery so that you feel confident to find things out for yourselves. They also have many different ways of helping you to understand what they mean and, because of this, you learn new skills very quickly. I was particularly impressed by how much you improve in talking, writing and counting. It was also good to see how well the Nursery school and day care work together so that you feel secure and very well looked after.

The adults in school work very hard to make sure that any changes they do are all for your benefit. I have asked them to think of ways through which they can test that, once they have done something. This will help you to make even better progress. I have also asked them to try their best, with your mums and dads and carers, to make sure that you come to Nursery as often as you possibly can. I know that you have a great time there and it is a shame if you miss out on all the fun!

Best wishes for the future and have a happy Christmas.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sarah Drake

Lead inspector

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