

# Mill Hill Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108752
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sunderland
<b>Inspection number</b>	337141
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 December 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Moira Fitzpatrick

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	48
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Ann Callaghan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Denise Kilner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 May 2008
<b>School address</b>	Doxford Park Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR3 2LE
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5535930
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed ten lessons taught by two teachers and two nursery nurses. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, teachers' planning, assessment data and documents relating to the safeguarding of children. They also considered the views of parents and carers expressed in seven questionnaires that were returned, and the views of staff in the questionnaires they returned.

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

- The children's rate of progress in the light of staff changes this term.
- The impact on children's learning of new systems and procedures introduced this term to improve provision.
- The staff's involvement in school improvement and how this is being developed.

## Information about the school

The nursery is average size for this type of school. It serves a predominantly White British community. The percentage of children known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly above average, so too is the proportion of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are no children with a statement of special educational needs. The school provides day care for children from birth to three years, and wrap-around care for children from three to 11 years, which is managed by the governing body and is, therefore, included in this report. The school operates flexible access provision so that parents and carers can choose a pattern which best suits their needs. Some parents and carers travel quite a distance to place their children in this nursery because of the flexibility it offers.

Since the previous inspection, the nursery has been affected by a high level of unavoidable staff absence. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2010 and staffing is now stable.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

The overall effectiveness of the nursery is satisfactory. Provision for learning is improving well under the strong and inspiring leadership of the recently appointed headteacher. There are strengths in the care and support provided for children and in the development of their personal qualities. Behaviour is good. All staff instinctively care for and support the children well. This makes children feel safe and secure and able to learn. Children in the registered child-care provision from birth to two years and Wraparound care are cared for well; care is satisfactory for children between two and three years. Children enjoy coming to school and their attendance is above average. Parents and carers are very pleased with the care and attention their children receive and some think that 'the staff do a marvellous job' and 'provide a caring, positive and interesting environment for my child to learn in.'

Children make satisfactory progress in their learning and reach the expected level for their age by the time they leave Nursery and children are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. This is because they have learned to follow rules and routines well and their behaviour is good. They also develop confidence and independence because they are allowed to choose the activities they do. Teaching is satisfactory overall and there is an increasing amount of good teaching as new systems are becoming embedded. Teachers are now more alert to children's interest and enthusiasms and are building a clear picture of what motivates different children to learn best. However, they are not always clear about what learning is taking place in some activities and this is an area for improvement in the school's priorities. The curriculum ensures that children have access to all areas of learning, but opportunities are often missed to include a range of different skills and knowledge in the planned activities.

The headteacher has quickly recognised the need to develop clear roles and lines of accountability and the professional development of staff is a priority in the coming year. Currently, the roles of staff with leadership and management responsibilities are underdeveloped. However, they are improving quickly as staff become more involved in monitoring and evaluating provision. The school's self-evaluation is now based on rigorous assessment of learning and provision and the school is increasing its capacity for further improvement. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, especially taking into account the impact of unavoidable staff absence. The school has a satisfactory and rapidly improving capacity for further improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that:
  - sessions capture and sustain the interest of all groups of children

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

- activities are planned which include a variety of skills across several areas of learning
- staff are clear about intended learning outcomes
- staff plan for all areas of learning outdoors and so meet the needs of those children who thrive best in this environment.
- Develop the leadership and management roles of all staff by:
  - sharing with each other their expertise and special interests
  - ensuring that leaders are given the necessary professional development to enable them to be more involved in monitoring and so able to lead on initiatives designed to improve provision and outcomes for children.
- Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of children****3**

Children enjoy their time in the nursery. They feel safe and happy because of the secure relationships they have with adults. Their above average attendance reflects their enthusiasm for school. They are confident when exploring the activities that are set out for them and discovering for themselves what they can do. Some children are learning to play alongside others and share toys as they play. They are able to develop their ideas and skills by concentrating for longer periods before moving on to another activity. There is still a number who do not settle for long to activities, either because they have not caught their imagination or they need encouragement to get started.

Children join nursery with skills that are broadly typical for their age and their achievement is satisfactory. Overall, they are making satisfactory progress in all areas of their learning and leave at the expected level for their age. They are making good progress in their social and emotional development, which helps them to become independent and develop confidence. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported to make the same progress as other children and they are fully integrated in all nursery activities. Children's good behaviour makes a positive contribution to the warm, happy atmosphere in the nursery. They follow rules and routines well which helps things to run smoothly, but they are not yet encouraged to tidy the nursery at the end of each session. This is a missed opportunity for developing the children's sense of responsibility to the nursery community. Children are kind and caring towards each other because all the adults set a good example in the way they care for the children. Children enjoy fruit provided for their snack and know that it is healthy food and good for them. By the time they leave, children are well prepared for the next stage of learning with good behaviour, the confidence to learn and good attitudes towards learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

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*These are the grades for children's outcomes*

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Children's attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of children's learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which children feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Children's behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Children's attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?

Staff have a secure knowledge of how young children learn. They plan activities which give children the opportunity to develop curiosity and become confident learners. Sometimes, these activities are not developed enough during the session, with for instance, the addition of new resources or by staff moving alongside children to assess if they are ready to develop their thinking or skills. This makes learning more often satisfactory than good. Nevertheless, there are examples of good questioning and of staff joining in with a game to develop children's ideas. Changes to how staff assess children's learning have been introduced this term. These are developing staff awareness of where children's interests lie and how to exploit this in their learning. For example, boys enjoy and extend their skills using construction toys to build bridges and ramps. While developing well, assessments are not yet sharply focused on the learning that is taking place. Though staff note where a child's enthusiasm lies, they are not yet using this information to plan follow on activities in other areas of learning. Further developments in this area are planned for next term.

The activities available in each session cover most areas of learning and meet the needs of all children. Activities are accessible to all children through adult support, though occasionally this is counterproductive in making the children dependent. A strength of the curriculum is the range of trips and visits that the nursery arranges throughout the year.

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These extend learning beyond the school and give children opportunities to find out about their locality. The headteacher has rightly identified a review of the indoor and outdoor environments as a priority this year. Access to outdoor learning is restricted and the grounds are not developed in such a way that children can easily move between the classroom and the outdoors when they choose. A comprehensive review of the environment is providing the opportunity for staff to re-design activities and improve the range available to the children. They are undoubtedly fired with enthusiasm for this initiative.

Good care and support from staff ensure that children settle quickly at the start of each session and are ready for learning. Children with special educational needs and/ or disabilities are identified and supported early when they join the nursery. Good links with external services ensure appropriate advice and guidance for families and school staff. Care for children, whose circumstances place them at risk of being vulnerable, is very good. Staff show great tenacity and sensitivity in supporting these children so they are able to learn alongside their friends and have as much fun in nursery as everyone else.

There is good provision in the registered child care for children from birth to two years. The warm and caring environment is well adapted to the needs of the age of the children. Provision for children between two and three years is satisfactory. Routines do not always meet all the needs of these children and staff expectations are not always high enough. However, there are good aspects. Good learning and enjoyment were seen where staff had prepared an activity which followed the children's interest in the snow.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher has given a good lead to developing provision since she took up post recently. A greater emphasis on monitoring children at play and identifying what motivates them to learn is inspiring staff to develop their observational skills and use their findings in future planning. Staff have welcomed the developments introduced this term and are giving wholehearted support to the headteacher's vision for improvement. They willingly take on new challenges and comment that these are helping them 'become more reflective practitioners.' The headteacher recognises the need for well-targeted professional development for staff so that they can meet her high expectations of performance and continuous improvement. Currently, the headteacher carries direct responsibility for all major areas of provision, which gives her too wide a span of activity.

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She acknowledges the need to share this with staff, when she has assessed fully their skills and professional interests.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school. They have defended its place in the community and manage its finances well. They are less involved in visiting and directly monitoring the work of the school than is usually seen. They ensure that child care in the registered provision is good from birth to two years and satisfactory for two to three-year-olds, and that provision fully complies with requirements for registration. Safeguarding procedures are good; they fully meet requirements and are robustly implemented. Equal opportunities are well promoted, so that all children have equal access to what the nursery has to offer. Good links with parents and carers are developing through recently introduced termly meetings to discuss their children's progress. Similarly, good links with external agencies ensure that the needs of potentially vulnerable children are well met. Community cohesion is satisfactory. The headteacher has begun to forge productive links with the neighbouring primary school to share information about children and ensure their smooth transition to reception.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers hold positive views of the school. They agree that their children are well cared for and safe, and several commented on the approachability of staff and their willingness to listen to concerns and give advice. The inspection found that the quality of care and support was good and this supports the views of parents and carers.

A small number of parents and carers voiced concerns about the information they receive on their children's learning and how they can support them at home. The school is already

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addressing these issues with termly information meetings with staff, children's learning journals and the planned new information board for parents and carers which will be installed next term when changes to the layout of the nursery are completed.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mill Hill 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 7 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	5	71	2	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	6	86	1	14	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	5	71	2	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	71	1	14	1	14	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	4	57	3	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	57	3	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	43	4	57	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)	3	43	4	57	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	43	3	43	1	14	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	43	3	43	1	14	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	43	4	57	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	43	4	57	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	43	4	57	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



15 December 2010

Dear Children

**Inspection of Mill Hill Nursery School, Sunderland, SR3 2LE**

Thank you all very much for letting me join in with your work and play during my visit just before Santa Claus came to visit you. It was very interesting for me to see how well you play together and share the toys and games you have to help you to learn. Your nursery provides you with a satisfactory education. You are all learning as expected and are beginning to know about so many different things. No wonder your families and teachers are so proud of you. You behave well and are kind to each other. This makes your nursery a happy place.

Your teachers look after you well and I could see that you feel safe and able to learn in nursery. I also noticed that your teachers are watching how much you enjoy different games and toys and are beginning to give you more of these so that you will learn even faster. They plan interesting activities and games and are busy thinking of even more ways to help you learn. To help a little more I have suggested they could include a few more challenges in your activities so that you learn more each day. One other thing I think would help your nursery to improve is that the teachers help the headteacher to improve the nursery quickly by sharing their good ideas with each other. Perhaps they will ask you what you think would make it even better and you could tell them all the things you like to do best.

Best wishes to all at Mill Hill Nursery for a busy and successful year.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead Inspector

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