

Helen Gibson Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108663
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	356407
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Elissa Hudson
Headteacher	Mrs Lynne Brown
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 10 lessons and observed the teacher, one senior educational practitioner, one nursery nurse and three specialist staff in Forest School provision. They held meetings with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and parents. They observed the school's work, including the school's improvement plan, assessment and tracking data, lesson planning and safeguarding policies and procedures. The responses in 35 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed.

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

- How well children learn, whether all groups make similar progress and what the strengths are in children's learning.
- How provision has developed since the previous inspection and what impact this has on children's achievement.
- The contribution of all staff and members of the governing body to school improvement.

Information about the school

The school is of average size for a nursery. It serves a predominantly White British community. The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. No child has a statement of special educational needs. Each year the school gives children access to additional provision for outdoor and adventure learning in Forest School settings. These are usually, but not exclusively, run by the local authority. The school offers extended services in breakfast and after-school clubs for children aged from three to eight years.

Since the previous inspection, the school has been affected by a high level of unavoidable staff absence. The headteacher was unavoidably absent at the start of this school year.

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

Children receive a satisfactory quality of education and they are well cared for in the Nursery. The friendly, welcoming atmosphere, which is valued by parents and carers, makes the children feel safe and secure. Children arrive happily at each session and are eager to be with their friends, finding interesting things to do. All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress from broadly typical starting points in all areas of their learning, except in their personal and social development and their knowledge and understanding of the world, where their progress is good. Their achievement is satisfactory overall. Behaviour is satisfactory and is better than this when children are outdoors and have plenty of activity and resources to engage them. They make a good contribution to making the Nursery run smoothly, by tidying up and looking after equipment.

Teaching is satisfactory overall; it is best when children are given plenty of scope to find out for themselves, from well planned activities such as those that they experience in the Forest School. Several parents commented on how much their children enjoy these experiences and talk about them, 'again and again' at home. The curriculum is satisfactory. However, staff do not make enough use of the large outdoor space to provide a wide range of activities from which children can choose. This means that for much of the time children are limited to the cramped space indoors, which is too small to provide a wide range of activities or make use of all of the Nursery's good learning resources.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and the Nursery functions effectively day-to-day. Currently, too many responsibilities fall to the headteacher. Other members of staff have relatively few opportunities to contribute to development as their roles and responsibilities are not defined well enough. Members of the governing body are supportive of the Nursery and are undertaking training to improve their effectiveness. The Nursery has made satisfactory progress against issues raised at the last inspection. It has an accurate picture of its overall effectiveness and what needs to improve. Improvements have been hampered by staff absence but since staffing has been stabilised these are now being addressed with more urgency. Taking all factors into account, the Nursery school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Up to 40% of school's whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate children's progress and improve provision for learning by:

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- increasing the space and activities available for child-initiated learning, with immediate effect, by making full use of the outdoor space throughout each session
- increasing the level of challenge for children by making better use of information about their learning to plan and provide stimulating activities which are well matched to their different levels of development.
- Review the roles and responsibilities of all staff and redefine roles so that:
 - all staff have responsibility for evaluating aspects of the school's work
 - all staff are responsible for identifying and contributing to areas for improvement
 - all teaching staff play a significant role in planning activities for learning and make the best use of their knowledge of children's needs to accelerate progress.

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

Children enjoy coming to Nursery. They feel safe and happy because of the good relationships they have with adults. This develops their confidence well so that they are able to move around the setting to access activities independently. They enjoy discovering for themselves what they can do, especially when they are in the Forest School setting or outdoors at the Nursery, where there is plenty to find out about. Most children play alongside others amicably and are willing to share toys and join in each other's play. They are able to develop their own ideas and skills when they have the opportunity to do so, and most are beginning to concentrate for longer periods before moving on to other activities. There are still a number of children who do not settle well to activities, either because these are not well matched to their needs or interests, or they are not encouraged enough to get started.

When children join Nursery their skills are broadly typical for their age. During their time in Nursery, they make expected progress and their achievement is satisfactory. Children identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported to make similar progress to their classmates. By the time they leave, nearly all children reach the levels expected for their age and each year a number exceed them. Children's progress is best in personal and social development, and in knowledge and understanding of the world, because of their involvement in Forest School activities where they learn to observe and ask questions about what they see. Children's behaviour is satisfactory overall and it is good when they are well managed or fully occupied with activities that interest them. When they have to listen for too long or are not interested in adult-led activities their behaviour declines and their learning slows. Children make a good contribution to the smooth running of the Nursery. They are learning to take turns and take responsibility as the 'special helper'. When they leave Nursery, children are well prepared for the next stage of learning, with above average attendance, good personal qualities and the confidence to learn independently. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

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These are the grades for children's outcomes

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

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?

Staff plan a range of activities to allow children to select what they will explore each session. They also plan a balance of teacher-led and child-led learning. Some activities are not developed enough to maximise children's learning; for example, by adding new resources or by staff questioning or showing how resources might be used to develop thinking, knowledge and skills. Other activities are planned to reflect children's interests, for example, the very popular hairdressing salon. Recent changes to how staff assess children's learning are not yet fully embedded, so that staff do not routinely incorporate their knowledge of children's learning when planning the next steps. This sometimes leads to activities that are not challenging enough. Direct teaching is satisfactory and takes account of children's interests and stage of development. Sometimes children can be passive and expected to listen for too long. They enjoy these sessions most when they are active, as when they select toys from a bag and try to guess initial letter sounds.

The quality of the curriculum is enhanced by the Forest School initiative which gives children the opportunity to learn outdoors from nature and enjoy 'adventurous' activities. This fires their enthusiasm and develops their imaginations well. Working with visiting artists, children worked rapidly to produce a model forest and placed pictures of themselves within the setting to show how adventurous they were and how well they could recall their exciting exploration. Provision within the Nursery is severely hampered

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by a lack of space indoors for the numbers of children attending each session. Children do not have enough access to learning outdoors when they are at Nursery, because not enough use is made of the good outdoor space to extend learning activities outdoors throughout each session. This under-use of a valuable resource has a negative impact on children's learning and development as it deprives them of the choice of where to learn. The school has plans in hand to develop the outdoor provision, but there is no reason why children should not have full access to this immediately, which would relieve the pressure on space indoors and provide additional space for a greater range of activities.

Good care and support from staff ensure that children settle quickly at the start of each session. Parents and carers comment favourably on the approachability of staff and of how welcome they are made to feel. Children have good relationships with all staff, especially their key person who knows them very well. These relationships make a good contribution to children's sense of well-being and security. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have their needs well met with prompt referral to external agencies to enlist expert advice and support. The Nursery overcomes difficulties well to manage staffing to give these children additional support, which is clearly of great benefit in helping them to integrate and learn alongside other children. Provision for children in the breakfast and after-school clubs is well organised and children are cared for well. Children feel safe and secure, and they make a good start and end to the day in a warm, supportive family atmosphere.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the previous inspection, an unusually high level of unavoidable staff absence has slowed the Nursery's improvement to satisfactory. The headteacher is now focusing staff on improving provision. Currently, however, responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the Nursery's work falls mainly to the headteacher. This means that not all staff are involved as much as they could be in identifying and leading areas for improvement. Nevertheless, the school's self-evaluation is broadly accurate and the headteacher is aware of where the most important improvements are needed. For example, the Nursery has already begun work on improving outdoor provision for learning but the plans are at an early stage. The senior educational practitioner and the Nursery nurse are not sufficiently involved in planning and evaluating learning activities so that their valuable knowledge about children is not put to the best use to accelerate their progress.

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Members of the governing body are supportive. They have recently begun planned visits to the nursery so that they are better able to hold it to account for the quality of provision and children's progress. They ensure that safeguarding procedures meet requirements and that the children and staff are safe and secure in school. Staff take care to ensure that children are not discriminated against and that all have equal access to the same learning opportunities. Good links with external agencies provide advice for staff when dealing with children's special educational needs. Other links with external partners greatly enhance children's learning through Forest School experiences. Community cohesion is promoted effectively in the nursery, but the contribution it makes further afield is limited. The Nursery has plans to link with a school in a different context in a neighbouring town to extend children's understanding of difference and diversity. Links with parents and carers keep them informed about their children's well-being and make them feel welcome in Nursery.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire, and those who spoke to the inspector, express positive views of the nursery. They are pleased their children enjoy Nursery and feel safe and happy there. However, a small minority of parents expressed concerns about the progress their children make, how well they are helped to support their children at home and how well their children are prepared for the next stage of education. The inspection found that the Nursery holds three consultation meetings a year to inform parents and carers about children's progress, which is usual in most nurseries. It does not have as many informal ways of communicating with parents as are usually seen and could do more to give parents insight into the progress and

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development of their children on a weekly basis. The inspection found that overall, children's progress is satisfactory, and the report suggests ways in which the school can improve this for all children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Helen Gibson 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 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 73 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	91	3	9	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	66	11	31	1	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	14	40	14	40	6	17	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	46	14	40	3	9	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	19	54	14	40	0	0	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	40	14	40	6	17	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	57	15	43	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)	17	49	13	37	5	14	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	54	12	34	4	11	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	46	15	43	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	46	16	46	2	6	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	20	57	11	31	0	0	3	9
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	74	7	20	2	6	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.



23 March 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Helen Gibson Nursery School, Tyne and Wear, NE36 0DL

Thank you for making me welcome at your Nursery and for allowing me to join in with some of your games and adventures. I found out that your Nursery looks after you well and gives you a satisfactory start to your education. Teaching in your Nursery is satisfactory and there are good parts to the curriculum, such as your visits to the Forest School and working with artists to write stories and make models. Your teachers know you well and make you feel safe and happy in Nursery. You are becoming confident and clever enough to do many more things for yourself. No wonder your parents and carers are proud of you!

Your behaviour is satisfactory, and it is good when you have space and plenty of interesting things to do. I have suggested that you should be allowed to work outside much more than you do now. Then you will have plenty of things to explore and can watch things change around you as small creatures and plants begin to grow. I know this is the kind of thing you really enjoy because you love your time at the Forest School so much. I think that more of this would be very good for your learning. I also noticed that you love to make giant slides and find out what you can do with water and pipes and kites when you are outside. These things made you very happy and helpful with each other because you enjoyed them so much. I was pleased to see how well you tidy up at the end of Nursery and that you look after your toys well.

Your headteacher and teachers want the best for you. I have suggested that teachers work closely together to find out which things work best and which need to be improved so that everyone helps to make your Nursery even better. You can help by being interested in all the things around you and learning to do even more for yourself as the weeks go by.

I hope you all have a lovely time for the rest of the year and enjoy being outdoors, whatever the weather.

Yours sincerely

Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead inspector

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