

Aclet Close Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113972
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	357457
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr J Lethbridge
Headteacher	Mr J Birbeck
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2008
School address	Aclet Close Bishop Auckland County Durham DL14 6PX
Telephone number	01388 603006
Fax number	01388 603006
Email address	acletclose@durhamlearning.net

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed activities in the school, including the work of two teachers during short visits to parts of lessons and extended visits to 11 lessons. Inspectors held discussions with members of the governing body, staff and parents and carers. They scrutinised the school's documentation including information about child protection and safeguarding, the curriculum, development plans and records of children's progress. They looked at the school's photographic record of children at work throughout the year. They analysed 36 questionnaires from parents and carers and eight from members of staff.

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

- The contribution of the staff team to maintaining children's outstanding progress.
- How effectively the personalised learning approach and arrangements for care, guidance and support help those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress.
- How the governing body has increased its involvement to help the school sustain its high quality since the last inspection.

Information about the school

The school is an average sized nursery. Children join the school once they are three years old and almost all have a White British heritage. Others, mainly from India, are beginning to learn English as an additional language. Although relatively few children have special educational needs and/or disabilities, a high proportion of them has a statement of special educational needs. The governing body manages part-time day care over the lunch period for children in the school. The school holds the International School Award (foundation level).

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

In this outstanding nursery school, children thrive and make outstanding progress in all aspects of their development. Children join the school with skills and abilities that are mostly below and for some well below those expected for their age. Of note is that more children have recently joined the school with low mathematical development and the school is beginning to address this matter. All children soon develop confidence and independence, and make outstanding progress from their starting points. Consistently in each year since the last inspection, children reach levels above those expected for their age in most areas of learning by the time they leave the school. All aspects of children's personal development are outstanding. They know the importance of looking after their health and well-being. Consideration for others and respect for property characterise their play and work. These important factors, together with their excellent behaviour and readiness to settle quickly and follow routines combine to make an outstanding contribution to the school community. Children's capability to work and play very effectively on their own or in groups and a noticeable willingness to act responsibly are key factors in making them ready for the next stage in their education. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Provision is exemplary in many ways. The outcomes for children are excellent as a result of very skilfully managed learning by teachers and support staff; a diverse, exceptionally rich and well-planned range of opportunities; and care, guidance and support of the highest quality enhanced through exceptionally effective partnerships with local agencies and health services. A rigorously followed equality policy prevents discrimination and all children participate fully in school life. The school is an important part of the local community through its excellent links forged with parents and carers.

Leaders and managers ensure all staff share the same philosophy for educating children and have a common purpose in sustaining excellence. Through greater involvement since the last inspection, the governing body knows the school well and gives strategic direction to its work. It ensures an excellent contribution to community cohesion. Its excellent arrangements safeguard children's welfare, including at the lunchtime club. The school's accurate identification and evaluation of its many strengths leads to precise and sharply focused development planning. Taking these factors together, the capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Press ahead with arrangements to improve children's mathematical development by assessing their abilities and difficulties precisely in all aspects of mathematical development.

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

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children find school exciting and enjoyable. They have great enthusiasm, eagerly join in planning activities with adults and classmates and seize opportunities to explore and investigate on their own or when working together with classmates. They become engrossed in activities and are rightly proud of their accomplishments. They contribute wholeheartedly to discussions, listen to adults and each other, and play a full part in group activities, such as when singing action songs. Such commendable learning leads to excellent achievement.

Year- on- year, children's attainment has been consistently above levels usually seen at the end of the Nursery Year. Each year since the last inspection, children's progress from very low starting points has been outstanding in all areas of learning. Assessments when children join school during the year now show more have low mathematical abilities when they start than was the picture previously. The school has begun to address this change but it is too early to see the success of its work. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally outstanding progress as their classmates in all areas of learning, and in particular show notable improvement in developing confidence, social skills and speech.

Children settle in and follow routines commendably well. The confident and lively way they go about their work and the trust they have in all adults reflects a very strong sense of feeling safe and secure. Their exemplary behaviour is a vital factor contributing to excellent learning and progress. They are exceptionally knowledgeable about food, for example, knowing the importance of eating fruit, exercise energetically and habitually take care with personal hygiene. With good attendance, growing independence, familiarity with using skills gained in all areas of learning, they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education.

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

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?

Teachers and assistants expertly manage children's learning. By diligently preparing and adroitly supporting activities they foster children's independence and curiosity. The highly effective guided activity at the start of each session enables children to think about and choose things they wish to do when playing and learning. All staff carefully intervene and cleverly and sensitively give support without reducing children's independence. They take every opportunity to develop children's vocabulary, knowledge and numerical skills. Such skilful teaching leads children to the next level of thinking. For example, in an activity about programming the movements of a simple robot, a group of children who were highly excited and enthusiastic were skilfully helped to recall the importance of a sequence, of counting accurately and of being patient while waiting in turn.

A key worker arrangement ensures each adult knows a group of children and their families very well. Carefully made observations of children at work are used to build assessments of children's progress which are carefully charted and exploited to focus particular help whenever it is needed. Learning journals, which incorporate a photographic record, form a useful medium for sharing information about children's progress with parents and carers. An exemplary feature is the way teachers and teaching assistants reflect on children's work at the end of each day and plan individual activities to build on earlier work and foster progress the following day.

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

Children benefit enormously from an exciting curriculum which balances adult-supported and child-initiated activities. Of especial note is the extensive way the school exploits its grounds and facilities, which offer substantial scope for active learning. The garden, wildlife and woodland areas do much to develop a strong sense of the importance of the environment and promote awe and wonder about the natural world. By exploiting themes, such as the Royal Wedding, and through visits and the contributions of visitors, the school enriches children's understanding in all areas of learning and substantially fosters their outstanding personal development. Links with other schools, in Romania, Spain and Poland, for example, have widened children's appreciation of local cultures in the common use of lullabies before sleep.

An atmosphere of calm, punctuated by the sounds of children enjoying play and work, prevails throughout. Outstanding care is the bedrock of children's successful learning. Early assessments show when children have particular learning needs. Partnerships with the local authority, health service and neighbouring schools combine with the expertise within the staff to give exceptionally effective support. In this way, children's learning needs, particularly in speech and use of language, or particular behavioural difficulties, are addressed very successfully. Close links with parents and carers successfully encourage participation and good attendance.

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?

Leaders and managers successfully realise their ambition and high expectations for all children to have the best possible start to their education. Outstanding outcomes represent excellent value for money. A strong team spirit and high morale amongst all staff lead to consistent approaches to managing children's learning and have sustained excellent progress and high levels of attainment year on year. The governing body provides strong support and is extending its role through, for example, questioning the reports it receives and seeing the work of the school at first hand. The governing body knows its next steps are to develop a systematic programme of visits to strengthen its evidence for self-evaluation. Attention to safeguarding is meticulous: the governing body has ensured all requirements for children's welfare are met, including at the lunchtime club. Staff are extremely well trained in child protection and safeguarding and in turn they deal with any concerns in a proper and very effective way. Importantly, too, they ensure that children are able to conduct themselves with consideration for others and respect for property. The governing body and school successfully ensure full equality of opportunity.

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

All children make equally good progress. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those learning English as an additional language, learn alongside their friends and play a full part in school life.

The school forges highly productive partnerships with parents and carers through day-to-day contact, guidance to promote involvement in their children's education, reports on children's development, and information shared via notices and a very accessible website. Exceptionally strong partnerships with local support, health and emergency services and other schools in this country and abroad greatly enhance the school's work, enrich the curriculum and contribute markedly to make community cohesion outstanding.

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	2
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

An average proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires and almost all were entirely supportive. All who wrote comments were very positive and appreciative of the support their children receive.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Aclet Close 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 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 75 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	94	2	6	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	89	3	8	1	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	26	72	10	28	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	78	8	22	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	86	5	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	78	7	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	72	10	28	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)	22	61	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	72	10	28	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	72	8	22	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	72	9	25	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	30	83	5	14	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	92	2	6	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



19 May 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Aclet Close Nursery School, Bishop Auckland, DL14 6PX

I really enjoyed my time with you in your school. There are so many interesting things to do that I could see how much you like being there. You have some wonderful places where you learn and play: indoors and outside on the climbing frames, the sandpit and water feature, the garden and the wood. I am sure you will remember for a long time things you have done and discovered. All the adults make sure you are safe and happy and that you can learn and play in many ways together.

Yours is an outstanding nursery. I was delighted to see how you all settle in quickly and join in your group discussions when you are planning things to do. I was also delighted to see how well you share things and take turns. I was impressed by how well you look after the toys and equipment. I really enjoyed listening to you sing and how much you really like making all the actions for the songs. I looked at the photographs of you at work and I saw how much you are learning while in the nursery. To make your learning even better your teachers are going to plan more activities to help you when counting and for you to use numbers.

You have many opportunities at Aclet Close Nursery to learn about life and these help you to prepare for your next school. Some of you will soon be leaving to go to another school. I hope that you have fond memories of your time here and that you all do extremely well in future.

Yours sincerely,

Graeme Clarke
Lead Inspector

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