

Ilminster Avenue Specialist Nursery School and Children's Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108896
Local Authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	356446
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Christine Huard

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

The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andreas Holthuis
Headteacher	Sheila Weir (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	16 July 2008
School address	Ilminster Avenue Knowle West Bristol BS4 1BX
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Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision

Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	Not previously inspected
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Age group	3–7
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Inspection number	356446

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Observations were made of small group activities, as well as the free-flow activities taking place both indoors and outdoors. Inspectors observed all the nine teachers and other Early Years staff assisting children in their learning. They spoke to parents and carers at the start and finish of the day and held meetings with governors and curriculum leaders. They discussed aspects of their work informally with many other members of staff. They observed the nursery's work in detail, and examined monitoring and assessment information, curriculum and development planning as well as monitoring records. Inspectors analysed 125 responses to questionnaires distributed to parents and carers and 21 returned by staff.

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

- How well the outstanding progress identified at the last inspection has been sustained, particularly in developing children's communication, language and literacy skills, and of different groups.
- The quality of provision for children in the specialist unit.
- How well staff provide well-planned and stimulating activities for children to learn through purposeful play.
- How well the leadership and management structure ensures that the nursery continues to function effectively through periods of change.

Information about the school

Ilminster Avenue Specialist Nursery School has 220 children, mostly part time. The children's centre opened in September 2010 and was subject to an inspection in February 2011, so was not included in this inspection. A specialist unit, known as Class 5, caters for 21 children with severe and complex learning difficulties and a few remain in the school until the age of seven. The nursery has a much higher proportion than usual of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The main areas of need are speech, language and communication, visual impairment and autism. While most of the children are of White British heritage, a wide range of other cultures are represented and an above average proportion of children are at the very early stages of learning English. Although children have a home base classroom, all classes share the veranda and the outside area. There is currently an acting headteacher following the retirement of the outgoing headteacher in April.

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

Ilminster Avenue Specialist Nursery School is outstanding. It makes superb provision for its children in both the mainstream classes and Class 5. As a result all children thrive in a nurturing atmosphere and make excellent progress from their different starting points. The outstanding practice identified at the previous inspection has been extended and improved further as the school has developed and expanded the services it provides for children and their families. The acting headteacher is ensuring that the strong ethos and philosophy of the school continue to drive it forward. Exceptionally good teamwork and a total unity of purpose are the main reasons for the school's success. The staff care passionately about the education and development of all the children. They are enthusiastic and well motivated. There is an excellent team spirit and a feeling of whole-school ownership of decisions made. Everyone strives to further improve what is already an exceptional school.

Children settle quickly and happily into the nursery because induction procedures are extremely thorough, and quickly develop highly positive attitudes towards their learning. Their behaviour is outstanding and they learn very quickly the importance of listening to adults and to each other. As a result all learning takes place in a happy and harmonious atmosphere. Children's needs are assessed even before they start nursery. Information from home visits is used to ensure that children's needs and interests are provided for from the time they start school. This ensures that the most able mainstream children are challenged appropriately and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with tailored support.

The curriculum is broad and stimulating and care is taken to ensure that children have a chance to pursue their own particular interests and learn through purposeful play activities. The quality of teaching and support provided is extremely high. The emphasis placed on improving the provision for children's literacy and communication skills is having an excellent impact. Group times first thing in the morning and afternoon ensures that all children have a chance to communicate by speaking, signing or use of symbols. Books are carefully chosen that appeal to all children, have the potential to stimulate young minds and help develop imaginative play. The Hungry Caterpillar supports the current focus on the life cycle of the butterfly in some classes and excites the children and engenders a huge range of activities, including movement.

The nursery works very closely with parents and carers and a range of outside agencies to ensure that support provided is at the optimum level. Safeguarding procedures are extremely robust and ensure that all groups of children are safe and secure. Children's 'Red Books' are an excellent record and provide a comprehensive picture of each child's development.

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Governance is outstanding. Members of the governing body visit the school regularly and monitor the school's performance carefully. Many new governors have been appointed as a result of the opening of the children's centre and while they are receiving excellent training they are not yet all fully confident in their role of challenging the school's performance. Morale is buoyant in this school because of the system of devolved leadership. This ensures that the school has been able to function at the highest level even through significant times of change such as the incorporation of the children's centre and the retirement of the headteacher. Staff know that the service they provide is of a high order. Monitoring is robust and self-evaluation is accurate, albeit a little cautious because leaders feel 'we can always improve'. The nursery has an excellent capacity for further sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all new governors complete their training so that they are fully confident in monitoring and challenging the performance of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children are independent, confident learners who tackle with great gusto everything that is on offer. They love school, and this is obvious from the happy smiling faces that surround you. Staff know and understand the needs of all the children and are skilled at providing exactly the amount of support that is required to take them forward in their learning. The use of commercially tested materials to extend children's communication and language skills is proving to be extremely effective. All classes have a range of computer software and timetabled activities, such as group times each morning and afternoon, which serve to reinforce these and encourage children to practise and extend their vocabulary and use of language. A consistency of approach across the whole school means that children constantly receive the same messages about their learning.

All children make outstanding progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English. This is because the progress of all children is carefully assessed to ensure they are making the progress they should. Although many children enter the mainstream classes with attainment that is very low, by the time they leave their skills are broadly average. Children in Class 5 make excellent progress, because of the dedication and highly skilled support of the staff who work with them. The use of a wide range of strategies to aid their communication has had a tremendously positive impact on their learning. Staff use, for example, body signing with children with severe sight problems, and signing and the use of visual prompts and symbols ensure all children can communicate effectively.

Children have excellent attitudes towards their learning and behave extremely well, moving sensibly around the school and in class. The layout of each room encourages children to become independent in choosing what they want to play with. They contribute to the smooth running of the school by, for example, clearing up after themselves. Two boys had been happily constructing and playing with a large train track. At the end of the session they cleared it away quickly, sensibly and with no prompting from anyone at any time, and restored the resources to their allotted place. Staff seize every opportunity to develop children's learning, whether it be in putting on a pair of wellingtons before engaging in Forest School activities or learning how to stay safe and healthy. Children's

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spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The introduction of a Cultural Week celebrated the traditions, food, music and arts of children from different cultures attending the nursery. They celebrate all the different festivals and they all play together happily. Attendance is good and the wide range of basic skills that they learn prepare children well for the future.

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	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	2
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?

'Who put the leaves in here?' asked a small child during a Forest School exploration. The child had not seen the willow cave since last term, when it had not started to bud. This illustrates how comfortable children are with asking questions and how keen they are to extend their own learning. A wide range of exciting play activities interest and motivate them highly effectively. The curriculum is outstanding. The outside environment is inspirational, for example the sensory area enables children to create sounds or explore textures. The use of Forest School activities develops children's exploratory and independence skills. The layout of each room encourages children to become independent in choosing what they want to play with. Teachers ensure that activities are available to meet the developmental needs of children at a range of levels. For example, some children were wielding large paintbrushes outside, developing their coordination ready for

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writing activities, while others were practising writing letters in the writing corner using pencil and paper. There is an excellent balance of activities the children choose for themselves and those led by an adult. There is an excellent emphasis on 'hands-on' experiences. A group of children were investigating themselves and made comparisons with their friends. The teachers' skilful questioning encouraged them to look at skin, eye and hair colour and identify similarities and differences. They became really engrossed, going on to compare clothes, colour and type and learning a whole new range of vocabulary.

The quality of care, guidance and support is exceptionally high. Staff are highly trained in order to provide for the many needs and disabilities of the children, particularly those in Class 5, some of whom have complex welfare needs. These are all met extremely well because staff are confident when dealing with a range of specialised procedures such as tube feeding. Work with the speech therapist ensures that children are helped to develop this skill and staff are accomplished at signing and questioning. Assessment strategies are excellent. Staff observe children carefully and record their development meticulously. This occurs across all areas of learning so their records are comprehensive.

Breakfast and after-school clubs are well attended. Provision is exciting and stimulating, meals healthy and nutritious. Arrangements for the transfer of children into and out of the nursery are excellent. Transition plans are devised and meetings and visits arranged for children and their parents and carers so that there is as little stress as possible.

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?

The acting headteacher is ensuring that the school does not just 'mark time' in this interim period before a new headteacher is appointed. A clear vision for the future of the nursery is shared by all staff. The governing body is rigorous in ensuring that children are safe and secure and all statutory requirements regarding safeguarding and child protection are fully met. There are careful daily checks on the safety of the resources and learning areas. The nursery ensures that there are equally high quality opportunities for every child and that there is no discrimination. For example, the progress of all groups of children is extremely carefully monitored to ensure that boys, girls, children at an early stage of learning English and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities all make the best possible progress. As a result, all children achieve equally well. The nursery has excellent relationships with parents and carers, and with the local community. There is a very clear

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understanding of community cohesion and the school has wide-ranging links and resources which help to extend children's understanding of other cultures.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

Over half of the parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, which is above average for responses nationally. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the nursery and they are delighted with the provision it makes for their children. There were many positive comments from parents and carers of children in both the mainstream and specialist nursery classes. For example: 'This is a very good nursery school with a lovely family feel. The children are exposed to a wonderful array of experiences,' and 'All the staff are fantastic and on hand to help any time.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Ilminster Avenue Specialist Nursery School and Children's Centre 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 125 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 190 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	103	82	21	17	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	111	89	13	10	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	80	64	44	35	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	81	65	42	34	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	95	76	29	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	85	68	39	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	78	62	45	36	1	1	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)	80	64	44	35	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	90	72	35	28	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	86	69	36	29	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	74	59	50	40	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	95	76	29	23	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	102	82	23	18	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.



9 May 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Ilminster Avenue Specialist Nursery School and Children's Centre, Bristol BS4 1BX

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really loved seeing you so happy and enjoying all the wonderful things to do and learn. You have a wonderful nursery with a fabulous garden and outside area and you certainly loved the Forest School activities.

You go to an outstanding nursery. All the adults give you exactly the help you need to help you learn really well.

You behave really well and you play very happily with each other. You make yourselves useful and always help to tidy up each day.

You all really enjoy all the activities that are provided for you. You have a wonderful time playing outside.

All the adults look after you exceptionally well and keep you safe.

Your headteacher and other leaders keep everything running exceptionally well and everyone enjoys working and learning at Ilminster Avenue because it is such a happy and well-organised place to be.

We have asked the leaders to make sure all the new members of the governing body complete their training so that they can really tell how well you are learning.

We hope you continue to enjoy nursery. You can help by continuing to behave well and showing such enthusiasm for your learning.

Yours sincerely

Christine Huard

Lead inspector

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