

Alfreton Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112485
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	378496
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Stafford

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill O'Hagan
Headteacher	Angela Stanton
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 February 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight sessions, involving five different practitioners. They held meetings with the children, parents and carers, staff and members of the governing body. A range of documents were examined, including the school improvement plan, assessment information, safeguarding procedures, minutes of governing body meetings and records of monitoring and evaluation. The inspectors also analysed the 36 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and eight completed by the staff.

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

- Do different groups of children make equally good progress from their various starting points?
- What opportunities do children have to develop their skills using modern technology?
- How well is the school providing children with opportunities to learn about the wider world?
- How effective is the governing body in holding the school to account through monitoring and evaluating its performance?

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average school provides places for up to 104 children. Children attend part-time for either a morning or afternoon session. Almost all of the children come from White British families. A very small number of the children come from minority ethnic backgrounds. A broadly average number of children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has gained several awards including Healthy School status, the Eco School Green Flag, the International School award and the Unicef UK Rights Respecting School award. The school's status as a leading practitioner in Forest School practice has enabled it to support other early years providers.

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

The school continues to provide an outstanding start to children's early education. In all key areas of provision, excellence has been maintained since the last inspection and good improvements have been made. The success of the school is firmly rooted in the superb leadership of the headteacher, a team of exceptionally skilled staff and a highly effective governing body. They are all, together, totally committed to the children's success, happiness and safety. They successfully implement the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework within a wonderfully stimulating and supportive ethos. A great strength of the school lies in its excellent partnerships with parents and carers, who value highly the tremendous support they and their children receive, especially in difficult times. The school fully deserves its reputation in the locality as a leading practitioner of excellence. Strong links locally and further afield contribute significantly to first-rate community cohesion.

When children start school their skills are well below the levels expected nationally for children of their age. Excellent teaching, rigorous assessment and an exciting curriculum enable all children to achieve exceptionally well. Outstanding progress is made in all areas of learning. In personal and social development the gains made by the children are particularly significant. The children show a real joy for learning and love their school. From the moment they enter they are active learners, exploring ideas and interests in depth. Relationships are exemplary and this helps the children to be supremely happy and confident in their play. They behave exceptionally well, keep very healthy and safe, and are exceptionally well prepared for the move to Reception.

Since the last inspection the children have been given more opportunities to use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Their skills are improving with the purchase of more resources. However, they have yet to reach the excellent levels evident in all other aspects of learning.

The school has maintained its outstanding effectiveness since 2000 and goes from strength to strength. Through rigorous self-evaluation, leaders, staff and the governing body are clearly aware of the school's considerable strengths and the areas to develop further. Within a positive culture of relentless improvement, the school has an excellent capacity to improve even further. It gives outstanding value for money.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in ICT from good to outstanding by:
 - planning more opportunities for children to develop their skills in ICT
 - extending further the range of resources for ICT
 - providing training for staff in the latest initiatives in technology.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children learn and achieve exceptionally well. From very low starting points, the majority of children exceed the expected levels for their age by the time they leave the school. High quality support and outstanding relationships have resulted in children making excellent progress. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds thrive in the welcoming and supportive environment. Their needs are identified early and generous staffing levels ensure that they make rapid progress and participate fully in all activities.

Excellent attendance and punctuality reflect the children's great enjoyment of school. The exciting learning environment ensures that all children are extremely keen to learn and try out new things. They really enjoy working and playing together in 'the builders' yard' or role playing in 'the kitchen', but they are equally happy to initiate their own individual ideas in their paintings and music-making. They regularly plan and review their own work, gaining important skills that prepare them exceptionally well for the future. All children, from the most able to those with complex educational needs, have plenty of scope to test out their own ideas. For example, in the Forest School, children were set highly imaginative and challenging tasks. They worked happily together to solve the problems that 'Sally Squirrel' encountered after she had fallen out of her tree. Children were able to learn rapidly in all six areas of learning. There were excellent opportunities for children to talk and listen. They were enabled to use their imagination creatively through the enormous number of resources available in this multi-sensory environment.

Excellent organisation, clear routines and outstanding role models provided by staff result in the children behaving exceptionally well, respecting each other's differences and feeling totally safe. They confidently use a range of tools in their activities, taking turns and acting sensibly. The children act very responsibly when tidying up after an activity. They all make very healthy choices at snack time and in their lunch boxes, knowing that, 'You brush your teeth afterwards to stop them going green.' They understand clearly the importance of regular exercise and follow very good personal hygiene routines. Children participate in a wide variety of community and cultural activities. Different foods are enjoyed when they celebrate a range of religious festivals. Through extensive fund-raising, both locally and in the wider world, the children are developing a strong empathy with people who are less fortunate than themselves. When questioned about why they recycle their books to

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children at their partner school in Kenya, they know that they are helping children who are more disadvantaged than they are.

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	1
The extent of children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Excellent and sometimes inspirational teaching contributes strongly to children’s outstanding learning and development. Highly effective assessment systems are used to plan rich and challenging activities across all areas of learning. Tasks are matched accurately to the needs and abilities of all children. This ensures that they make rapid progress. Children are exceptionally well supported and nurtured throughout their time in the school. They are quickly helped to feel safe and secure in school through excellent induction arrangements. Support from outside agencies, for the children and their families whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, is very effective. Any barriers to learning are significantly reduced through these early interventions.

The school is organised exceptionally well to utilise fully the learning opportunities for the children, both indoors and outdoors. Most teaching is done with an adult supporting small groups of children. Favourable staffing ratios and high levels of expertise are essential ingredients in the children’s outstanding progress. Within a highly stimulating environment and a vibrant curriculum there is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated tasks. There is a strong focus on letting the children explore and experiment through purposeful play. At the same time staff are highly

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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skilled in knowing when to intervene to help accelerate the learning. For example, in one activity a group of boys were sorting and assembling different materials from the outdoor 'Atelier' box as they built their space rocket. As a result of very careful intervention from the key worker, introducing new words like 'astronauts' and 'telescopes', the children were able to talk enthusiastically about their intentions. When another boy approached his friend told him, 'You will need space boots and a space helmet,' and quickly equipped himself to join the role play. Although good progress is being made in ICT, the children are not receiving regular access to a wide range of new technology such as laptops and iPads.

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 at all levels possess a strong ambition to maintain excellence in all areas of provision. They know the school extremely well and continually seek ways to enhance provision by meeting challenging targets. Through rigorous monitoring of the teaching and learning, all staff know what is expected of them and they meet demanding expectations. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. She is totally focused on enabling every child to reach their potential, whatever the circumstances. In this highly inclusive environment, the school is an extremely happy and successful place to learn. Staff morale is high and this is confirmed by the positive outcomes from the staff questionnaire. Adults are proud to be members of staff. Parents and carers too are delighted to be part of this exceptional ethos and take a strong and active part in their children's learning and progress.

Procedures for safeguarding are rigorous and highly effective. At the time of the inspection they fully met government requirements. Policies and procedures are very thorough and securely embedded throughout the school. The promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. The school evaluates its work rigorously in order to build on its many strengths within the community and further afield, and has had a marked impact on other schools in the locality through sharing its outstanding practice. Rich and varied opportunities are provided for the children to learn about the wider world. Above all the children, in their structured play, experience ideas 'beyond the school' through a strong promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The inspirational Solardome provides exceptional opportunities for children to learn cooperatively about the use of tools and provides an excellent quiet area for the structured development of children's talking skills.

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The governing body performs its duties extremely well and shares successfully in the work and direction of the school. Key areas of provision, such as safeguarding and community cohesion, are monitored and evaluated regularly by individual governors who produce incisive reports. The governing body shares the senior leaders’ drive for continual improvement and provides high levels of challenge and support, very effectively holding the school to account.

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

There was a good response to the questionnaire, with half of the parents and carers returning completed forms. The school clearly enjoys the confidence and support of every parent and carer who returned the questionnaires. They express very strong levels of satisfaction and there were no areas for concern. Their views were accurately summed up by the following comment: ‘This is an excellent school. Staff have the time for every child and their needs and my daughter has experienced so many wonderful activities. It is a super place for learning of all kinds.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Alfreton 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 71 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	92	3	8	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	92	2	6	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	25	69	10	28	0	0	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	64	12	33	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	89	4	11	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	27	75	8	22	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	81	7	19	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)	26	72	6	17	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	30	83	4	11	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	69	8	22	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	70	7	19	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	89	3	8	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	34	94	1	3	1	3	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 8 April 2011 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.



29 September 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Alfreton Nursery School, Alfreton DE55 7JA

I really enjoyed my visit to your lovely school. Thank you for making me so welcome and helping me to find out about your school. I loved watching you all do exciting things and I saw how happy and settled you all are.

Your school is excellent and I am very pleased that your parents think so too. These are some of the best things about your school.

- The staff are very proud of you all because you are learning extremely well and making excellent progress.
- You all love coming to school.
- Your behaviour is very good indeed and you are all very kind to one another.
- The school is a very happy and safe place to learn.
- Your teachers plan really exciting things for you to do, especially in the Forest School.
- Your headteacher, the governors and all of the staff work very hard to make the school a very special place.

I saw how much you all enjoy working on the computers, finding the programs and working out problems. I have asked the school to give you some extra things you can do with technology. I hope you will enjoy these activities and continue to work as hard as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Stafford
Lead inspector

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