

Whitecross Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112480
Local Authority	Derby
Inspection number	378493
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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	Richard Shepherd
Headteacher	Janet Mitchell
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2008
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Age group	3–4
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 12 activity sessions, and seven practitioners were observed working with children. Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff and governors, and inspectors spoke informally to children. The school improvement plan, safeguarding documentation, assessment records including a selection of children's 'Learning Journeys', and planning documentation were scrutinised, as was children's work in lessons and on display. Nine staff questionnaires and 42 parental questionnaires were also analysed.

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

- The attainment levels of children when they first enter school, and the level of progress they make in all 13 strands of learning.
- What is needed to improve children's communication, language and literacy skills.
- How well the curriculum is adapted to meet the range of different needs including children at the early stages of learning English and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The rigour of self-evaluation and the appropriateness of plans to drive forward school improvement.

Information about the school

In this average sized Nursery school the vast majority of children are White British. There are a very few children who are at the early stages of learning English. A much smaller-than-average proportion of children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Very few children are known to be eligible for free school meals. Part-time nursery education is provided for the majority of children; that is, five sessions of three hours. However, one further session can be negotiated, and full-day provision is available for 24 children. Children usually spend between three or five terms at the school, before transferring to Reception classes in local primary schools. Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. A new full-time teacher and a teaching assistant started at the school in September 2011. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status and the International School award.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Whitecross Nursery School provides children with a good start to their education. Children are happy and enthusiastic and develop into self-assured individuals because of the good levels of care, guidance and support they receive. They feel safe and secure and form warm and trusting relationships with adults and with each other. Children behave well and they are kind and considerate towards each other. They follow routines willingly and learn to share and work with others, while developing a good capacity to operate independently and to make choices for themselves. Parents value the school and say their children are eager to attend. Comments such as 'a fantastic learning environment' and 'The nursery is very welcoming and staff very approachable,' were typical of those recorded on the parents' and carers' questionnaires.

When children first join the school, their skills and abilities match those expected for their age. Good progress is made and by the end of Nursery, attainment is above age-related expectations apart from in writing and in children's knowledge of linking sounds and letters. In these areas, attainment matches that expected. Not all staff are proficient in the teaching of sounds and letters, and the opportunities for mark-making are not promoted well enough in both the indoor and outdoor environments. When children choose activities for themselves, adults mostly interact with them to support and develop their learning effectively. On occasions however, their input does not extend children's learning sufficiently and sometimes opportunities to develop their language skills are missed. Questioning sometimes breaks the flow of children's play and, at times, staff provide children with the answer in their eagerness to support rather than guide them towards finding the solution for themselves. Although assessment information shows that the very few children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, observations do not fully support this information. Too often these children are overly supported by adults, and interactions are not focused well enough on their learning.

The headteacher has an excellent understanding of what is needed to improve provision. After identifying weaknesses in planning and in tracking children's progress, she introduced a robust planning system linked to the Early Years Framework for young children, and a systematic system of assessment. These initiatives are not yet embedded in practice, although all staff are committed to improvement. Responses to the staff questionnaire show morale is high. The governing body is supportive of the school and is keen for its continued success. However, it's monitoring of policies, for example safeguarding, although developing,

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is not yet sharp enough. Even so, given the school's track record of improvement since the last inspection, accurate self-evaluation and the strong commitment of staff, its capacity for further improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate all pupils' progress, especially in linking sounds and letters and writing by:
 - developing the confidence and expertise of all staff in the recently introduced practices for planning and assessment
 - ensuring consistently high quality interactions between adults and children which extend children's learning
 - maximising opportunities for promoting early mark-making skills in both the indoor and outdoor environments
 - providing training in the teaching of letters and their sounds
 - providing children with special educational needs and/or disabilities with opportunities for more independent learning and unaided interaction with their peers.

- Increase the impact of leadership and management by:
 - formalising lesson observations, and providing staff with written feedback identifying strengths and weaknesses in practice which can be acted upon
 - the governing body establishing a rigorous cycle of annual review of key policies and practices, especially those related to safeguarding.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**2**

Children arrive eager to learn. They happily greet each other and their key worker and quickly busy themselves in activities. Behaviour is good and the introduction of the 'Learning 2 Learn' initiative has contributed to setting consistent standards and expectations of staff and a desire within the children of wanting to please. Parents and carers are welcome to stay at the start of the day ensuring their child is happy and settled before they leave. Consequently children feel safe, and their achievement is good. This was seen as children learnt to handle scissors safely, developing language skills in the doctor's surgery, and making models using playdoh. Children at the early stages of learning English make progress similar to that of the vast majority of children, and boys achieve as well as girls because the staff ensure the curriculum effectively engages their interest.

Relationships are strong and children are caring and kind towards each other. They willingly take turns, as was seen during a music activity and when blowing bubbles in the sensory room. They learn how to keep healthy by eating a variety of fruit at snack time, learning the importance of washing their hands before eating and by taking regular exercise in the outdoor area. Children are highly active when outdoors, making good use of a range of equipment to promote their good physical development. A positive contribution is made within the school by following

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instructions, being considerate and by taking on small responsibilities. Children are beginning to learn the importance of contributing to the wider community, for example, by taking part in fundraising events such as Red Nose Day and by collecting harvest goods to support the Storehouse at a local Church. Their pride in their achievements and excellent levels of attendance reflect their enjoyment of school, and the range of personal qualities and skills children acquire, help them to prepare for their futures well.

These are the grades for children’s outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Children’s achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Children’s attainment ¹	2
The quality of children’s learning and their progress	2
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	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	1
The extent of children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

A well-planned curriculum builds successfully on children’s skills and experiences across all areas of learning both indoors and outside. There is a good balance between activities that children can access for themselves and planned group sessions designed to develop key concepts and skills. A strength of teaching is the very warm and supportive relationships between adults and children that help children feel secure and be confident to learn. ‘Learning journeys’ give parents and carers a very clear insight into the activities their children have experienced. They are a key part of the school’s good partnership with parents and carers. However, although staff note down very precisely what the children are doing, they do not always record the learning or use this information sufficiently well when planning activities. A good range of visitors effectively enrich provision. For example, during Diwali celebrations, an Asian dancer was welcomed into the Nursery who involved children in dance workshops. Accommodation and resources are suitable and used

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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well even though a few are jaded and worn, for example, in some aspects of the outdoor area.

The key worker system ensures all children are known well by an adult and their well-being is closely monitored. This supplements the positive relationships between adults and children which promote good levels of support and care. Arrangements for children joining the school and liaison with their parents and carers are strong, and the school actively supports children’s transition to their next settings.

Attendance is promoted very effectively with an emphasis on encouraging parents and carers to value education, as shown by almost all children having 100% attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is leading by example and has made a good start to raising expectations of staff. Her clarity of judgment and the actions taken are driving forward school improvement well. Although monitoring of teaching and learning is good, staff do not regularly receive written feedback about the strengths and development areas of their work. Therefore there are missed opportunities for staff to develop further. On taking up her post, according to the School Improvement Partner’s report, much time has been spent in improving policies and management systems which are now good. Some important policies, for example safeguarding, are still in the process of being reviewed and as yet the governing body does not have a rigorous cycle of review. The governing body says it is now much more involved in the school’s work and is recognising the importance of evaluating assessment information. Governance is satisfactory and all statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding.

The foundations for community cohesion are promoted well. Children develop a keen sense of belonging to a cohesive community, and work and play alongside each other in harmony. Careful planning enables children to learn about other customs and traditions such as Diwali, Hanukkah, Christmas, a Peruvian Christmas and Chinese New Year. Close links with a Nursery in Peru is effectively developing children’s understanding of the wider world. Leaders are diligent in tackling any discrimination and ensuring that children enjoy equality of opportunity. However, leaders recognise there is still work to do to ensure the very few children with special

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education needs and/or disabilities have opportunities to increase their interaction with other children and develop their independent learning skills in order to make consistently good progress. Children’s good achievement overall and enjoyment clearly show the school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

Around 56% of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. All of them agree their child enjoys school and is helped to lead a healthy lifestyle. They think the school meets their child’s needs, that leadership and management are good, and they are happy with their child’s experience of school. There are no areas where a significant number of parents have concerns. Inspection findings reflect those expressed by the parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Whitecross 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 42 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 75 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	81	8	19	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	90	3	7	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	27	64	10	24	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	62	11	26	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	86	5	12	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	29	69	10	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	79	9	21	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	62	10	24	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	34	81	8	19	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	60	13	31	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	64	11	26	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	90	4	10	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	39	93	3	7	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	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 08 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.



3 October 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Whitecross Nursery School, Derby DE1 3PJ

Thank you for being so kind and helping the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We were really pleased to see how well you behaved, played together and listened to the adults in your school. Well done! Your parents and carers told us how much you enjoy coming to school and we can understand why. Adults plan some very interesting activities indoors and outside to help you to learn and it is clear you enjoy your tasks.

We think that the Whitecross Nursery is a good school. This is because staff take good care of all of you. You are keen to help others and already know the importance of taking turns. It was good to see how you brought your bikes back to the starting point so other children could have a turn. We were very impressed with how much you know about staying healthy. The fruit for your snack looked very juicy and we were pleased you all know that you need to wash your hands before eating. You are trying very hard to use your knife and fork and remembered to say 'please' and 'thank you' when you had your dinner.

When we visit a school it is part of our job to suggest ways in which even a good school could improve. So although you make good progress we think that this could be faster especially in learning about letters and the sounds they make, and in mark-making. These are things that will help you with your reading and writing as you grow older. We have also asked the headteacher to help the staff to become even better teachers, and your school governors to check every year that all policies are up to date.

Finally, thank you again for your help and we must say how pleased we were to see that so many of you come to school each day. We hope this continues because coming to school regularly is so important in helping you to learn.

Yours sincerely

Lois Furness
Lead inspector

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