

Henry Allen Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110195
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	378059
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Phillips
Headteacher	Jamie Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2009
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Age group	3–4
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed seven lessons taught by nine teachers or nursery nurses. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and groups of children. Inspectors also spoke to some parents and carers when they brought their children to school. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and samples of children's records. Inspectors analysed 37 questionnaires from parents and carers as well as 12 from staff.

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

- Children's punctuality and attendance.
- The use of data to track the progress of individual children, to monitor the relative achievement of different groups and to identify areas for development.
- How well teaching and the curriculum meet children's differing needs and their impact on progress across all classes.
- The role of leaders and the governing body in driving school improvement and in ensuring that statutory requirements are met.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized nursery which takes children for five morning or afternoon sessions each week. Children come from the local community as well as from further afield. The school usually has a broadly average proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, although at the time of the inspection, none had been identified as it was very early in the school year. Most children are from White British backgrounds.

The substantive headteacher at the school was absent for the inspection and had been since the start of term. The school was receiving support from another headteacher during this absence with her time divided between the nursery and her own infant school.

Some children stay for a lunch club. This provision is managed by the governors. There is an afternoon pre-school on the same site that is not managed by the governing body. This is inspected separately.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its children an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Although children's achievement is mostly satisfactory, the school does not give them an acceptable standard of education. There is an inadequate curriculum that restricts children's physical activity and development and therefore their ability to adopt healthy lifestyles. In addition, those in charge of the school have not worked well enough to make the changes needed to halt the decline in attainment since the last inspection. The school does not take sufficient steps to keep children safe. There has been a breakdown in relationships between leaders and some teaching staff, with about half indicating in questionnaires that they do not feel valued and that they have too little opportunity to contribute to self-evaluation procedures. This means that a drive for improvement is not firmly embedded across the school. School self-evaluation lacks rigour and priorities in the development plan have not been communicated well enough to all teaching staff. There is too little monitoring of teaching and learning and staff are not given sufficient guidance to help them improve. Recently collected data on children's progress has not been analysed in detail to check for trends or to identify areas where improvement is needed. The school is less effective than it was at the time of the last inspection and the weaknesses in self-evaluation mean that the capacity to improve is inadequate.

The school does not meet statutory requirements in some very important areas. Safeguarding arrangements do not ensure that children are kept safe at all times. Current staffing arrangements mean that not all classes have the required access to support from a qualified teacher. The local authority has already identified this issue and plans are currently being implemented to tackle it.

Children are well motivated in lessons and satisfactory teaching helps them to make satisfactory progress most of the time. By the time they leave the school, most children are working in line with the nationally expected levels for their age. This is lower than at the time of the last inspection. Though it has some strengths, teaching occasionally keeps the children too passive and does not always challenge them enough. Children do not always have the opportunity to review their learning at the end of sessions. Teaching staff have good expectations of children's social

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development. Children quickly learn positive values such as politeness, good manners and the importance of caring for each other. They are polite and courteous and make sensible decisions in lessons about where they are going to work. Children show a willingness to keep themselves and others safe through their good behaviour and positive relationships with adults.

The curriculum is not adapted adequately to meet children's differing needs. The large outdoor area is not used well enough to support learning in the different areas of the curriculum and there is very little free flow between indoors and outside. Teaching staff have a good knowledge of individual children and they ensure that there is a reasonable balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities in lessons in the classrooms. This is less evident in 'garden time' when children go outside for their set outdoor time each day.

Children thoroughly enjoy school but rates of attendance are low. This means children are not well prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders do not do enough to monitor absences so that they can demonstrate the reasons for low attendance. Despite this, the school's engagement with parents and carers is good and this has helped to ensure that punctuality has improved since the last inspection. Most children now arrive during the fifteen-minute block allowed at the start of each session.

Parents and carers are highly complimentary about the school's work. They make a significant contribution to the school by raising funds or taking part in projects to develop facilities such as the sensory room. Leaders are diligent in seeking the views of parents and carers and this helps to ensure that they are fully involved in their children's education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that children are kept safe by meeting statutory requirements in all areas of safeguarding.
- Implement current plans to meet fully statutory requirements for staffing levels.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - increasing the rigour of self-evaluation by leaders at all levels and developing a shared vision for improvement
 - ensuring that the performance of all staff is appraised each year
 - improving communication in school so that adults feel valued and confident about contributing their ideas to development planning
 - regularly monitoring teaching and learning so that adults are helped to improve their teaching
 - analysing assessment data to check the progress of different groups of children and to identify where improvement is needed.
- Improve attendance rates by ensuring that absences are monitored more closely to identify trends and patterns.

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- Strengthen the curriculum and increase children’s physical activity by:
 - ensuring that outdoor learning is fully integrated into every area of learning
 - facilitating more free flow between the classrooms and outdoor areas.
- Improve teaching by:
 - ensuring activities are more consistently pitched at the right level
 - giving children more opportunities to talk about their learning at the end of lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

4

Most children are working within the levels expected for their age when they start in the nursery. Clear, calm routines enable children to settle and they make steady progress in most lessons although many are capable of achieving much more. Children greatly enjoy learning and are enthusiastic, especially when working on tasks they have chosen for themselves. In a session with a whole class, a new story was introduced well and children learnt new skills quickly. There was good use of repetition to help children learn new vocabulary. Children responded well to astute questioning by the nursery nurse and this extended their recall of the story. In a small group session, number skills improved steadily as an adult used dice to check children’s counting skills. Questions such as, ‘Is that more or less?’ helped to develop children’s mathematical vocabulary. However, some whole-group activities lack purpose and when this happens children lose concentration and learning loses impetus. For example, a session where children sang number rhymes when preparing for snack time was too long and did not fully engage the children.

Although at the time of the inspection there were no children with special educational needs and/or disabilities in school, an analysis of records show that they make the same mainly satisfactory progress as others over time.

Children cooperate well most of the time, and are good at sharing resources and supporting each other. For example, a boy and girl sensitively negotiated about who was going to work first on a computer. Children demonstrate their sound awareness of safety by using resources sensibly and following school rules. They say that they feel safe and that ‘grown-ups are kind’. Healthy eating is encouraged effectively by adults. Children happily eat fruit but weaknesses in the curriculum mean that opportunities for physical activity are not freely available throughout the day. Consequently, children do not adopt sufficiently healthy lifestyles.

These are the grades for children’s outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Children’s achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3

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Taking into account:	3
Children’s attainment ¹	
The quality of children’s learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which children feel safe	3
Children’s behaviour	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	4
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Children’s attendance ¹	4
The extent of children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Important weaknesses were found in the systems for safeguarding children at the start of the inspection. However, members of staff offer sensitive support to any children who are unhappy or have failed to settle quickly. This has helped the settling-in time for new children to run smoothly. The school provides suitable support for children who are having difficulties, sometimes collaborating with a local school to get additional support. Systems for improving attendance are ineffective. The school does not analyse attendance data with sufficient rigour and does too little to tackle the high rates of absence of a small group of children. The well-attended lunchtime club is enjoyed by children and provides a worthwhile addition to the school’s provision.

Teachers and nursery nurses work together well to ensure that there are no significant variations between children’s progress across the three classes. They plan together, making satisfactory use of assessment information based on observations of children at work to identify what to teach next, especially for indoor activities. Activities chosen by children are well organised, and interest and engage them most of the time. However, work is not always pitched at the right level for all and, at the end of sessions, adults give children too few opportunities to talk about their work so that they can review learning and move it on. These factors are placing limitations on the progress made by some pupils, including their physical development.

Adults make learning enjoyable by planning interesting activities in lessons in the classrooms, but there are too few opportunities for working outside. This is because the use of the outdoor area is timetabled rather than being led by the needs, preferences or interests of the children. Planning for outdoor learning is less

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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thorough than for other times of the day and the different areas of learning are not integrated well enough into outdoor provision.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets children’s needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders have not ensured that their ambitions for the school are shared by all staff. There is insufficient involvement of staff in planning for school improvement and self-evaluation lacks rigour. There is too little monitoring of teaching and learning so areas for development are not being identified quickly enough. Some staff did not have the scheduled annual appraisal of their work in the last academic year, making it difficult to celebrate successes or to secure improvement if it is needed. Although the school has some helpful links with the neighbouring junior school and with some local businesses such as a strawberry farm, partnerships have not been sufficient to secure adequate outcomes for all children.

Governance is inadequate because governors have not ensured that the school complies with statutory requirements. Visits to school have helped the governing body to keep a watchful eye on provision. However, they have not always done enough to check that they are getting a full picture of how well the school is doing so that they can provide the necessary level of challenge.

The governing body has rightly identified that communication within school is not good enough and although they have taken steps to tackle this, staff still feel it could be improved. For example, until this term, the school did not hold regular staff meetings so that ideas could be shared. This means that not all information is transmitted effectively.

Although there is no discrimination, the school does not promote equality of opportunity effectively because not all children have equal access to support from a qualified teacher. Leaders are beginning to make sharper use of a wide range of data to check more closely the progress of different groups but this is still in the very early stages of development. The school’s contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Children respect the beliefs of others. The school works closely with parents and carers to respond to local need. Children begin to develop an understanding of their place in the wider world by learning about celebrations such as Diwali and the Chinese New Year.

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Safeguarding procedures are inadequate. The school does not do all the right things to keep children safe. There is a lack of diligence in ensuring that the school site is safe. Risk assessments are not used well enough to identify and tackle possible dangers to children around school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

There was an above average return of parental questionnaires. Almost all parents and carers who responded are very pleased with all aspects of the school’s work. The many positive comments included, ‘Parents are kept well informed and feel part of the school at all times,’ and ‘My child has settled very quickly and very easily at Henry Allen.’

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Henry Allen 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 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 61 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	92	3	8	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	84	6	16	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	29	78	6	16	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	78	7	19	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	78	7	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	27	73	8	22	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	70	10	27	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	70	7	19	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	28	76	7	19	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	73	6	16	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	73	7	19	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	30	81	5	14	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	31	84	5	14	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.



21 September 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Henry Allen Nursery, Amersham HP6 6NW

Thank you for talking to us when we came to see you in your nursery. You were very friendly and we enjoyed talking to you. There are some good things about your school, but we found that the school is not doing well enough. There are some important things that need to be made better and we have asked that the school be given extra help to do this.

These are the best things about your school.

- You are already learning new things in lessons and there are lots of interesting activities to choose from.
- The grown-ups help you in lessons and look after you if you are unhappy or upset.
- You behave well and are very happy in school.
- You help each other in lessons. It is good that you feel safe in school.
- Your mummies and daddies are very pleased that you come to this school.

These are the things we have asked your school to do next to make it better.

- Make sure that you are always kept safe.
- Make sure that all the grown-ups are working together to improve things.
- Give you more chances to work outside when you would like to, rather than just at 'garden times'.
- Check that you all come to school regularly and if you are away, make sure they know the reason for this.
- Make sure you are able to talk about your learning at the end of lessons.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard and being so happy!

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper
Lead inspector

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