

Ashmore Park Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104279
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	377053
Inspection dates	17–18 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Nursery
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Bateman MBE
Headteacher	Susan Lacey
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited fifteen activity sessions, taught by seven adults. They held meetings with the headteacher, staff and governing body, and spoke informally to parents, carers and children. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinized a range of documentation including teachers' planning, a selection of children's learning journals, the school improvement plan, assessment records, monitoring and evaluation records, and safeguarding policies and procedures. They also analysed the responses contained in the eight questionnaires returned by staff, and the 43 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- Are higher attaining children now doing better, and are children with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities making the best possible progress?
- What evidence does the school have for saying key aspects of its work are still outstanding and has the promotion of community cohesion improved since the last inspection?

Information about the school

This average-size nursery school has an above-average proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most of these needs are to do with speech and language, and/or social and emotional difficulties. Almost all children are White British. The school works in partnership with a local special nursery, which supports children with severe learning difficulties, and with the local Children's Centre that shares its site. It has achieved Healthy Schools status.

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

This is an outstanding school. The excellent quality of education it provides arises out of the passion and commitment that all staff bring to ensuring children do as well as they possibly can, so that they are fully prepared for primary school. Leadership and management are outstanding. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and well-founded. Strengths are built upon and areas for improvement are tackled very robustly. This has ensured that all children, from the least to the most able, now make the same excellent progress and have relevant experiences to introduce them to other faiths and cultures. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The daily and extremely rigorous checks on teaching and learning ensure teaching is of the highest quality; staff receive on-the-spot assistance from senior management to keep it so. Each child is seen as unique, with different needs, abilities and talents that must be catered for at all times. The systems in place ensure that, as far as possible, this will always be the case. All of this demonstrates that the school has excellent capacity for further improvement.

Parents and carers are full of praise for what the school does, describing it as a 'lovely nursery' where 'teachers are very friendly'. The health, safety, well-being and welfare of the children are at the heart of what the school does. This results in high quality care, guidance and support for children and their families, fostered by excellent links with parents and carers, the Children's Centre, the local special nursery, and, where relevant, external agencies. As a result, children feel extremely safe and they thoroughly enjoy school. Their behaviour is excellent and they are successfully encouraged to reflect on their actions and how these affect others.

Most children start school with skills and abilities that are well below those expected for their age. They achieve exceptionally well and become increasingly independent in their learning and personal development. The large majority leave school with skills and abilities above those expected for their age. The exceptionally well-planned curriculum contributes to this because it is highly responsive to the children's individual needs. Staff know the children really well. They are meticulous in observing and recording learning during each session and they use the information extremely well in their planning. The children's learning journals provide a good record of what children do across all areas of the curriculum and, increasingly, what they do outside of school. The journals are less useful as records of children's progress because work shown is not always dated and photographs are not always annotated. While the records staff keep are meticulous in doing these things so that progress can be readily tracked, the lack of such information in the journals means

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that the information for parents is not always as clear and detailed as it could be.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve children's learning journals to provide a more comprehensive overview of progress across the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

The children's happy, smiling faces at the start of the day confirm their enjoyment of school. Watched over by an adult, they complete the self-registration process confidently with their parents and carers. Most separate easily from their parents and carers, running eagerly to start on the various activities prepared for them.

Older children show an increasing ability to write their names independently, while younger children make good attempts at doing so. The large majority of children recognise their own names and, as they learn to read initial letter sounds, can pick their first names out from a list. Where initial letters are the same, higher attaining children are becoming increasingly able to use subsequent letters to find different names. These activities are developing early reading and writing skills very well. Children are getting better at taking turns and listening to adults and to each other. Staff sensitively encourage those who speak less well or frequently to speak clearly and articulate their thoughts more precisely. Where relevant, they do this by following the programmes set by speech therapists.

Using magnetic construction materials, several children showed a good understanding of shape as they constructed and named triangles, squares and cubes, and counted the sides on them. Children readily talk about 'more than' and 'less than' as they count and arrange equipment and form patterns with them. They develop early mathematical skills very successfully through these activities. As they talk with staff, it is clear that children are becoming increasingly self-critical, looking for ways to improve their work. This was particularly evident in an art session as they mixed and matched colours to create an autumn picture.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with severe learning difficulties, make the same excellent progress as other pupils. This is because staff are extremely vigilant, they know the children and their families really well, and they construct well-focused individual education plans to meet the children's needs. Work from last year shows that similar excellent attention is paid to the needs of higher attaining children. Their learning is extended in a range of ways that broaden as well as increase it.

Skilled teaching is fostering in the children a good sense of their own identity and of their place within the nursery and the wider community. This includes learning about their own and the local heritage, and, increasingly, about the world beyond, for

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example, by raising money for charity and visiting another school to celebrate Diwali. Children have an excellent understanding of a healthy lifestyle, enjoying a range of fresh fruit and vegetables at snack time, and washing their hands before eating, after going to the toilet and after ‘messy’ activities. They are highly active throughout each session, making good use of the wide range of equipment to promote their physical development. The school makes good use of the environment, including the allotment it shares with the community, and of sports coaches to enhance the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

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	2
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Children’s attendance ¹	2
The extent of children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The school provides a very warm and welcoming environment where children thrive socially and emotionally. Relationships are excellent and home-school links are firmly established. At the start of each session, adults greet the children and their parents and carers warmly, engaging them in conversation and suggesting to the children a range of activities that might interest them. Children’s individual learning plans or, in the case of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, their individual education plans are shared and reviewed with parents and carers. The school reaches out to them and supports them exceptionally well, including in helping their children to learn, for example, through workshops and improved attendance at parents’ evenings. Staff are vigilant in contacting parents and carers who do not attend, to keep them up to date.

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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The staff’s responsiveness to children’s different learning needs, and their ability to adjust learning accordingly, is the key to the school’s success. All six areas of learning are available for exploration, indoors and out. While all planning starts from the children’s areas of interest, what staff want children to learn is skilfully woven into this. Staff select equipment very carefully each day to ensure that it gives children the best possible chance of meeting the learning intentions for each session. They are quick to change the equipment to add extra challenge if a learning intention is met early, or to support learning if it needs to be broken down further. For example, having observed children trying to construct a bridge, staff noticed that they were finding it difficult to join pieces of equipment. As a result, drainpipes and guttering were introduced to the outdoor area, and a wide range of large and small construction equipment set out indoors, to foster these skills. Children were justifiably proud of the excellent progress they made as they persevered in building homes for animals, constructing shapes and making vehicles.

Excellent induction arrangements introduce children and their parents to the nursery, and effective links with the feeder primary school ease transition to the next phase of education. The school works hard to impress on parents and carers the importance of regular attendance and, although attendance continues to fluctuate from term to term, overall, it has improved and is good. Excellent support is provided for children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. The school works very closely with professionals from the Children’s Centre to do this and it readily accesses specialist support when needed.

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 headteacher has very high expectations of staff, governors, children and parents. She communicates with them very effectively and uses them exceptionally well to drive improvement across the school. The excellent partnership within the senior leadership team, and the extremely effective teamwork across the staff, demonstrate that the vision for improvement is firmly embedded at all levels in the school. It manifests itself in the continuous monitoring of provision and progress, and the swift action taken to remedy identified areas for improvement. The daily involvement of senior management in each learning space, in the reflection meetings held at the end of each session, and in the weekly meetings to establish a shared approach to teaching and learning, contributes to this. The levels of challenge

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provided at these meeting were evident during the inspection when staff were closely questioned on how they were going to take children’s learning further. Senior leaders also check teachers’ planning and children’s work away from class. The ‘Learning Space’ books provide comprehensive information about children’s progress and show clearly how very effectively the information is used in planning.

The governing body challenges the school exceptionally well. It requests reports on various aspects of the school’s work, and is equally passionate about securing the best possible outcomes for the children. The school meets recommended good practice in respect of safeguarding and child protection. Staff are well trained, and children are kept very safe and secure.

The drive for equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school’s work. The school monitors the progress of different groups very carefully, thereby ensuring that all make the same excellent progress. It welcomes children from all backgrounds and cultures, whatever their ability, and works very hard to meet their different needs. The school has an excellent understanding of the community it serves, and of the local community, and it is working hard to establish in the children a greater understanding of the wider world. Its links with a school that has a wider cultural mix is helping with this, as are the recently established links with a school in Sweden. Overall, the school promotes community cohesion well.

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

Views of parents and carers

An above average proportion of questionnaires was received by the inspection team.

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Parents and carers are full of praise for the school. They were unanimous in their appreciation of what the nursery provides and no areas for improvement were identified. Parents say they are 'really impressed with the standards' and describe the nursery as a 'great place' where their children are 'happy' and 'really come on' and the staff are 'very helpful'. Inspection evidence supports the parents' views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Ashmore Park 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 80 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	74	11	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	79	9	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	32	74	10	23	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	63	13	30	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	84	6	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	36	84	6	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	81	8	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)	29	67	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	33	77	9	21	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	70	11	26	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	74	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	84	7	16	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	39	91	4	9	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.



19 October 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Ashmore Park Nursery School Wolverhampton WV11 2LH

Thank you very much for helping us to find out about all the things you do in your nursery. We really enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work and play. We thought the shapes and vehicles you made were really good. It was lovely to see how happy you all are and we know why. It is because all the adults take really good care of you and you feel very, very safe. You know anyone will help you if you are upset or just want to sit and talk. Your behaviour is excellent and it is good to see how you are beginning to help each other and share your ideas. Your parents and carers also told us that you are really happy at the nursery and that everyone is very friendly and helpful. We could see that this is true.

Your nursery is excellent. Your headteacher and all the adults are always looking at ways to improve it further so that you can learn more and more all the time. The governing body also wants you to do really well and it keeps asking the school to show what it is doing to make sure of this. We think your learning journals, which you now call your 'special books', are lovely and we enjoyed seeing all the photographs of what you do even when we are not there. We did notice, however, that some important things were missing at times, like notes about what you are learning next to some of the pictures of the exciting things that you are doing. We have asked your headteacher to include this information so that your parents and carers can see how much progress you are making.

Best wishes to you all, and thank you again for helping us. We hope you will enjoy learning for a very long time and will always want to do really well.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell
Lead inspector

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