

Millfield Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108745
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	377807
Inspection dates	1–2 May 2012
Lead inspector	Jayne Utting HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	81
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Hudson
Headteacher	Anne Gunning
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2009
School address	Bell Street Sunderland SR4 6JR
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Registered childcare provision	Millfield Community Nursery School
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	30
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	20 April 2007

Age group	3–5
Inspection date(s)	01–02 May 2012
Inspection number	377807



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Introduction

Inspection team

Jayne Utting

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 11 sessions led by one teacher and six early years practitioners. Meetings were held with parents and carers, members of the governing body, the behaviour outreach team, Groundworks and staff. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school development plan, the safeguarding policy and policies about the childcare provision. The inspector analysed 38 questionnaires from parents and carers and others completed by staff.

Information about the school

This average-sized nursery school is located just outside Sunderland city centre, near the main hospital. It became a neighbourhood nursery in 2004, then, following refurbishment in 2008, it was designated as Millfield Children's Centre. The school is the main site for the centre, linking with Diamond Hall Infant school to provide services such as stay and play, time for rhyme and dads and kids. This has enabled the school to develop its links within the community. The community rooms are also used to run a weekly nurture playgroup as well as family learning activities throughout the year.

While the majority of children are of White British heritage, the nursery has a significant number (26%) of families from black and minority ethnic groups. Approximately 25% are disabled children or have special educational needs, with 13 of these supported through early years action plus. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The nursery provides a number of commissioned places for children from vulnerable social backgrounds.

There is onsite childcare managed by the governing body and children from three months to the age of four years use this provision throughout the year. There is a service level agreement in place for the school to provide daycare for the children's centre. This provision was inspected as part of this inspection.

The current headteacher took up post in September 2010.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Millfield is a satisfactory and strongly-improving school. It is not yet good because teaching and learning are not sufficiently individualised to ensure that all children make the progress they are capable of. Its strengths include the promotion of children's good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children clearly love coming to school, behave well and display a positive attitude to their learning, engaging in all activities with enthusiasm. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Most children enter nursery with expected levels of development, particularly those who have transferred from the daycare care provision, and make satisfactory progress during their time in school. Disabled children and those with special educational needs make better progress than that of their peers because provision for these children is more carefully tailored to their individual needs.
- While the environment is rich in resources to develop early literacy and communication skills, there is a recognised need to monitor provision closely in relation to numeracy in order to ensure that children make better progress in this particular area of learning.
- Systems for tracking and assessment are beginning to provide important information about the progress of individual children. However, practitioners do not consistently use this good assessment information to plan effective and appropriately differentiated adult-led activities, which challenge children to take the next steps in their learning. As a result, the quality of teaching overall is satisfactory.
- The highly-effective leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the governing body, has ensured that important changes to tackle the school's self-identified weaknesses and drive improvement have been implemented. While there has been a sharpened focus on monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, there is a recognised need to look closely at the quality of children's learning in order to identify those characteristics of teaching which will further improve the achievement of children.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and increase children's rate of progress by:
 - focusing monitoring and evaluation activities on the quality of children's learning, enabling practitioners to identify and embed those characteristics of teaching which will further improve children's progress
 - ensuring that planning and delivery always take account of children's current levels of ability with more adult-led activities that are well-matched to these starting points, particularly for middle- and higher-ability children
 - continuing to monitor and evaluate provision in relation to 'problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy,' ensuring that children make better progress in these areas of their learning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The nursery class has been remodelled over the past 18 months in order to provide a rich learning environment which supports children's developing independence well. This is a reflection of the high priority given to personal, social and emotional development and, as a result, children make better progress in this key aspect of their learning. By the time children leave school, the large majority have made satisfactory progress in all areas of learning, entering Reception with skills and abilities in line with expectations for their age. This represents satisfactory achievement overall. Progress in relation to 'problem solving, reasoning and numeracy' is slower than other areas of the curriculum, and this is being closely monitored by the leadership team. Children's early mark making and their developing appreciation of literacy is valued through a range of opportunities across the nursery. Role-play in particular is used as a meaningful context to encourage children's writing. For example, children were observed writing out prescriptions and appointment times in the vet's area. However, there is a recognised need to develop additional targeted, adult-led writing activities, ensuring that all children make the progress they are capable of in this key area of learning.

Disabled children and those with special educational needs make better progress than that of their peers due to the more individualised support they receive from teachers, early years practitioners and, where necessary, additional outside agencies. This is also the case for the majority of children for whom English is an additional language.

All parents and carers who responded to the inspection survey report that the school helps their child to develop skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. They judge that their child is making good progress, however, inspection evidence pointed to satisfactory progress.

Quality of teaching

All parents and carers consider that their children are well taught. Inspection evidence found the quality of teaching to be satisfactory. However, teaching is improving as a result of regular monitoring of teaching by senior leaders and appropriate training and support for

staff. Teachers are also benefiting from opportunities to reflect upon the good practice of other schools. Good relations between children and adults, and children's enthusiasm to learn, typified all activities observed. Some aspects of communication, language and literacy are taught well, with adults supporting children to use and respond to speech effectively. For example, children demonstrated good social language skills when playing in the vet's role-play area. They talked animatedly to their friends about their pet's ailments and were able to ask questions, provide explanations and listen to the responses of their peers. In addition, staff were skilled at introducing new vocabulary such as 'stethoscope' and 'thermometer.' Children for whom English is an additional language were observed listening to these interactions, and were encouraged to copy words and sentences that they heard being modelled by staff and children alike. Support staff are well-deployed, particularly in group time, providing additional support for those children with special educational needs, ensuring that they can engage fully in learning.

The daily teaching of letters and sounds has recently been introduced to improve children's achievement in this area. This is undertaken in smaller groups, made up of children of broadly similar ability. Early evaluations show that children are beginning to progress in this praise-rich environment which works to build their confidence and ability.

While teachers and early years practitioners assess children's learning through observations of their play, these are not used effectively to plan for the next steps in each child's learning. As a result, some activities do not challenge children sufficiently, resulting in satisfactory achievement, particularly for middle- and higher-ability children. There is weekly planning in place for child-initiated learning which reflects children's interests, but this needs extending to include more differentiated adult-led activities which are based securely on the school's tracking data and key worker observations of individual children.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Children's good behaviour is a strength of the school and this is reflected in the views of parents and carers, none of whom raised any concerns regarding the behaviour of children in school. Staff set clear expectations and boundaries and these are consistently reinforced and are understood well by children. The school has been proactive in establishing a nurture group for children with specific behavioural needs and their parents. Evaluations from this have been very positive and had a marked impact on children's behaviour in school and their attitudes to learning.

Relationships between staff and children are warm and caring and this is facilitated by daily opportunities to meet in key worker groups. Staff are adept at modelling appropriate social behaviour. As a result, children respect one another and the majority understands the importance of sharing, listening and taking turns. Children are encouraged to manage risk in a safe and supportive environment. For example, the outdoor area provides plenty of challenge and children are given the opportunity to climb on outdoor apparatus, jump off small logs, climb trees in the wild garden and ride bikes downhill safely because they are aware of the rules and boundaries and understand how to keep themselves safe. Children were observed cutting up their own fruit for snacks and reminding their friends that the knives were sharp.

The school promotes prompt and regular attendance as an important preparation for primary school. Absences or regular lateness are carefully followed up with parents and carers. As a result, the school has exceeded the local authority's 87% target for nursery

school attendance. The school routinely celebrates differences between individuals and children enjoy learning about other cultures, a clear reflection of the importance the school places on developing the spiritual and cultural awareness of the children.

Leadership and management

The resolute determination of the headteacher has successfully focused the school on raising standards and improving the progress of all children. There is a clear commitment to promoting children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and this is reflected in the school's aim to develop life skills and personal growth alongside learning. The school improvement plan sets out clear, challenging targets, including the development of more robust strategies to monitor the quality and impact of teaching. There is now a range of professional development opportunities, including regular lesson observations and more focused staff meetings, all of which have had a positive impact on the overall quality of teaching. However, there is a need to focus more on the quality of children's learning, so that staff can identify and embed in practice those characteristics of teaching which will further improve the achievement of children. Given the school's accurate self-evaluation and its recent track record of improvement, the capacity to improve further is good.

The governing body is clearly influential in determining the strategic direction of the school, offering an appropriate balance of support and challenge. It is active in the school through regular focused visits, which give an in-depth insight into the impact of school improvement strategies on outcomes for children. The school's arrangements for safeguarding children meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern.

Staff have worked hard to gain the confidence and respect of parents and carers and this is reflected in the overwhelming support which the school receives. One parent commented that, 'The school is there as much to support me as my children.' Parents and carers feel informed not only about their children's achievement, but also about how they can best support their learning outside school and this is promoted further by the many family learning opportunities offered.

The school places a great emphasis on ensuring equality and tackling discrimination of any kind. The school can point to striking examples where children whose circumstances make them vulnerable have been supported well, enabling them to engage fully in school life.

The Early Years Foundation Stage delivered in the registered childcare provision

The governing body manages provision on the school site for children under the age of three years. It is regarded as a fully integrated part of the nursery school and the daycare care manager is a member of the senior management team. The provision complies with the requirements of registration and the overall effectiveness is good. Strengths in provision include the good quality of care, effective adult-child interactions, good opportunities for meaningful play indoors and outdoors, and the attention given to building children's confidence and well-being.

Staff are well-supported and all are focused on ensuring the best outcomes for children. The environment is rich in resources to develop early literacy and communication skills, and staff were observed in high-quality interactions with children. They sit at the children's level and

use language well, encouraging children to respond to them, listening attentively to their efforts. Books are easily accessible to the children and they love to snuggle in the cozy baskets listening to the stories read by staff, while commenting on the pictures they see. Effective systems for assessment ensure that adults have a good knowledge of children's needs, interests and talents as well as ensuring that any disabled children or those with special educational needs are quickly identified and supported. Staff use this information well to provide a varied curriculum, which engages children and fosters a positive attitude to learning which children carry with them into nursery. For example, a group of children found a snail in the garden area. They talked animatedly about their find, listening to staff who were able to tell them interesting facts about the creature. In another 1-1 activity, the practitioner sat with a child while they cut shapes out of dough. The staff member used appropriate shape vocabulary well as a means of extending the child's learning. As a result of such practice, children make good progress in all areas of their learning. Staff have built productive relationships with parents and carers through effective induction and regular communication, which in turn has a positive impact on children's ongoing development and well-being.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage of the registered childcare provision, inspected under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage for the registered provision	2

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 pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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 pupils. 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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 May 2012

Dear Children

Inspection of Millfield Nursery School, Sunderland, SR4 6JR

Thank you for showing me round your nursery when I came to visit. I really enjoyed watching you take care of your poorly animals and looking at your special learning journals which show all the fabulous things you have done during your time at nursery. You all took the time to tell me about the things you enjoy best when you are at nursery. I hope you are still having fun in your vet area and that all the animals are getting better. Everything you told and showed me helped me to decide that Millfield is a satisfactory nursery school.

I was very interested to see all the different places where you can play in nursery. Most of all I liked the studio, the book area and your brilliant wild garden with the bird boxes. You behaved really well and I was impressed by how you help and look after each other. I also visited the Rainbow Room and enjoyed playing with the train set, exploring the garden and listening to stories in your cosy den areas. All your teachers showed me that they know you well, but I have asked them to think about the things that you need to learn next so you are ready to start big school in September. You told me that you like going to nursery, love your teachers and feel safe when you are there. Your parents and carers also told me that they are happy with the nursery and that you have good teachers.

It was lovely to hear how well you are doing at learning new rhymes, letters and sounds. To help your school to be even better, I have asked your teachers to find ways to help you learn even more during your time at Millfield nursery school, particularly about numbers and counting.

You should be very proud of how hard you all work at school and how kind you are to all your friends there. Well done!

Yours sincerely

Jayne Utting
Her Majesty's Inspector

