

Staghills Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119100
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379729
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2012
Lead inspector	Eithne Proffitt

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	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Ormerod
Headteacher	Linda Connelly
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Eithne Proffitt

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. The inspector observed eight teachers and nursery practitioners teaching 16 sessions and observed children playing and learning within the continuous provision. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and with school staff. Although there were no formal meetings with children, opportunities were taken to talk with the children and observe them talking during their sessions in school. Observations were made of the school's work and the children's learning journals. The inspector looked at photographic evidence and documentation relating to the children's attainment, evaluations of the provision, and leadership and safeguarding arrangements at the nursery. The inspector analysed 84 parental and carers' questionnaires as well as others completed by staff.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized nursery school that serves the immediate community and beyond, and feeds 15 different primary schools. The school is fully integrated within Staghills Children's Centre and offers a range of extended services. The headteacher is also head of the children's centre. The majority of children attend nursery on a part-time basis, although the school offers a number of more flexible places within the provision through the full day care in the 'Hedgehog Club'. The majority of children are of White British heritage with a small proportion of children of Asian heritage, who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. A small proportion of children are identified as having special educational needs, although none currently have a statement of special educational needs.

The day care provision and the children's centre did not form part of this inspection but are inspected separately and reports can be found on the Ofsted website.

Staghills Nursery School is part of a consortium of schools recognised by the Department for Education as Early Years Teaching Centres. These centres provide early years training for staff and governors and work to improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage in other schools. The school has also achieved the Learning Excellence Award for forest school work, the Investors in People Bronze Award and Silver Eco-school 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	1
Achievement of children	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of children	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. Since its last inspection the drive for continuous improvement and high-quality education for all children has been relentless. A clear and determined focus on individual needs has ensured that all children make outstanding progress in all aspects of their learning. This ensures they are well-placed to reach, or exceed, age-related expectations by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in their next schools.
- The satisfaction of parents and carers is evident in their many overwhelmingly positive comments such as, 'the nursery environment is nurturing and enriching, supporting and developing learning in all areas - a perfect place for my child to begin their education journey'.
- Outstanding teaching fully engages the children in meticulously planned experiences that capture each child's imagination, exploit their creativity and challenge their thinking. This personalised provision includes all children, regardless of challenges or needs, ensuring rapid progress for all. Provision for more-able children is very effective but the school does recognise the need for more opportunities to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills to push that learning even further forward.
- Behaviour is outstanding. The key-worker system is extremely effective in building and sustaining trusting relationships. Children say they feel safe and secure. They clearly enjoy learning and rapidly develop in confidence. Attendance, although not statutory, is good and is reflected in the children's obvious delight in coming to school.
- Leaders and managers are highly effective. They are ambitious, manage performance extremely well and are determined in the pursuit of excellence for all children. The headteacher has successfully steered developments to strengthen the effectiveness of the nursery school and to embrace its role within the children's centre. Children have access to an exceptionally rich

curriculum that supports their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their development as independent, involved learners.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop further opportunities to extend the more-able children's early reading, writing and calculation skills by:
 - providing short, discrete sessions to teach these skills
 - embedding specific levels of challenge, across all curriculum areas and aspects of the provision, for children to practise and develop these learned skills.

Main Report

Achievement of children

Parents and carers, including those of children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, express confidence that their children are making very good progress. Inspection findings confirm these views.

Children enthusiastically come into school, keen to discover what new and exciting things are on offer. They settle into their key worker groups and listen intently to the adults' input. In these short, focused sessions, personal, social, reading, writing and mathematical skills are very carefully integrated. For example, while retelling the story of the Three Billy Goats Gruff, the children worked together and spoke with impressive expression when taking on the role of the characters; used appropriate mathematical language relating to the size of the goats and positional language such as 'above' and 'below' to locate the troll.

All activities, both adult-led and child-initiated are carefully planned to quickly consolidate, and then rapidly extend, specific skills. The children's enjoyment of these is tangible, as is their enthusiasm for learning. They throw themselves into challenges, such as building a hospital from string, planks and material; mixing up lotions and potions to stock the medicine cabinet; scraping the scales and tickling the tongue of a real trout and persisting in the design and making of their 'dragon wings' in the enchanting woods. Through these activities, children are making significant progress in communication, mathematical and problem-solving skills. Their squeals of delight and pride in their achievements are obvious and celebrated by all.

The majority of children begin nursery with skills that are generally below those expected for their age. They achieve exceptionally well, often making two years' progress in just over one year in the nursery. As a result, when they leave for their next school, their skills in all aspects of learning are better developed than those expected of four-year-old children.

The school has recently successfully targeted the achievement of boys. This is now in line, and sometimes above, that of the girls. The school's outstanding woodland provision has been at the forefront of this success. Here, boys are not only fully

engaged in enticing problem-solving activities but, through the nurture and focus of small-group teaching, have developed positive attitudes and a confident approach that they now apply to all aspects of their learning.

Quality of teaching

All adults have a clear vision that 'nothing is impossible' and they expect the very best for, and from, the children. Continually moving learning and progress forward is a priority that effectively promotes the children's outstanding achievement.

Every adult knows every child and all are committed to personalised learning. Each day, the progress of children is discussed at length and planning for the 'next steps' is immediate. This approach helps all groups of children make rapid progress, including those with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English. Dedicated key workers ensure that learning is meticulously recorded and celebrated with parents. Assessment records are impressive and demonstrate the consistently strong impact that the excellent teaching is having on children's learning over time. Through these Learning Journeys, in the big 'floor books', and in planning for topics and themes, children are given, and seize, the chance to participate in planning and developing their own learning.

There is a clear focus on providing imaginative and creative learning opportunities, particularly in the large-scale investigative activities outdoors. Here, children's keenness to steer their learning was obvious. Given a huge cardboard box, the children instantly planned a pirate ship, adding the challenges of raising the decks to see out; ensuring that a ladder could be safely stored on board and that access was assured for pirates to 'walk the plank'. The outstanding development of language skills, problem-solving and independence in learning were well supported by the children's resilience and persistence to see the task through to completion.

Parents and carers speak with enthusiasm about the range of learning opportunities provided. 'These have been invaluable in building upon my child's learning experiences, enjoyment of learning and confidence-building' was a comment typical of many. Exemplary promotion of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development pervades all aspects of the nursery, bolstering children's confidence, self-esteem and enjoyment of a curriculum that is indeed memorable, captured in many forms and shared with parents and carers.

Behaviour and safety of children

Parents and carers who completed the questionnaire unanimously agreed that their child feels safe in school and expressed no concerns about behaviour. Inspection findings confirm the view that children's behaviour and safety are typically outstanding over time.

The children confidently state that they feel safe in school and are aware of some of the risks that need careful attention. One child said, 'No-one can get in and when you go out, make sure you close the gate behind you!' The children are encouraged to carry out their own risk assessments, for example in the woodland. They are very much aware of how to embrace and enjoy this area but also how to stay safe. One

child commented, 'It's very safe but there are some bits where you have to be careful and listen to the grown-ups, like in the base camp and round the fire'.

Adults carefully assess all risks and, through the curriculum. They allow the children to take some carefully calculated ventures but also arm them well with strategies to support their personal safety. For example, when making chocolate 'drinks' using a variety of methods, the children were acutely aware of the possible hazards. Nobody attempted to drink the concoctions they had made in the shallow, cloudy water area but many had a go at tasting the ones made with fresh milk. Similarly, after handling the trout, children were seen to immediately go, unprompted, to wash their hands.

Relationships are the cornerstone of the nursery and are firmly based on mutual respect. Adults model how to be an effective learner as they play alongside the children, challenging and supporting ways for the children to confront issues, resolve problems and manage their own behaviour. Any hint of unkindness is tackled swiftly, apologies are offered and accepted, and children return contentedly to their play. Attendance is consistently good. The nursery has excellent systems to promote the importance of good attendance and there is also a shared understanding that the school will support any families struggling to maintain continuous attendance for their children.

Leadership and management

Led by the inspirational headteacher, the nursery has gone from strength to strength since its last inspection. With the unquestioned support of senior leaders and governors, the school is a fully inclusive learning community that is regarded by the local community as 'its very heart'. The expertise and proven ability of all staff and managers have been recognised beyond the immediate neighbourhood and the school's best practice is now shared with local primary schools, across the local authority, and beyond, through the nursery's role as a designated Teaching Centre. This status recognises a commitment to strong professional development for all staff. The impact of this is seen in the consistently good and, more often, outstanding teaching within the school and the children's consistently outstanding progress and achievement. This clearly demonstrates the school's outstanding capacity for further improvement. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation ensure that the school knows itself exceptionally well. All practitioners recognise the headteacher's high expectations of their work and rise to these admirably. They relish the fact that much has been entrusted to them in terms of generating ideas and taking a lead on initiatives. A genuine sense of teamwork pervades the school and the daily discussions around children's progress and the wealth of valuable assessment information that is gathered and shared with parents and carers, are testament to the staff's commitment to the achievement of the children, their own professional development and the future of the school.

Partnerships with other agencies abound. The school is in an enviable position, being an integrated part of the children's centre. However, leaders of the nursery are selective in the support they broker for the school, focusing intently on the possible positive impact on children's welfare, learning and development.

Safeguarding, child protection, inclusion and equal opportunities are the core of the provision and all statutory requirements are met and often exceeded. Parents and carers comment most positively that 'it's not just the child; it's their whole family, their whole life that matters in this school'.

The promotion of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and the school's focus on early years' philosophy ensures these aspects are well developed and embedded in daily practice. The curriculum is outstanding. Adults continually assess and modify the wealth of provision to entice children's interest and engagement, promote their continual learning and ensure an enabling, inclusive environment where each child is developed as a competent, confident learner.

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	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 child's 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 settings	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 children 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 children are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the children's 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.



11 May 2012

Dear Children

Inspection of Staghills Nursery School, Rossendale BB4 7UE

Thank you for being so welcoming when I came to your nursery. You told me that you have a lovely time and that you learn lots and lots of new things every day. This letter is to tell you that I think your nursery is outstanding. That's a very long word but it means 'brilliant'!

Your teachers know that you are very special. They take very good care of you and help you to do your very best. They ask you lots of questions that really make you think hard and work things out for yourselves. You do this really well and this will help you when you go to big school and when you are older and get a job. So will coming to school every day. This is very important, so keep it up!

You are very well behaved and know how to keep yourselves safe. I was delighted to see how kind you are to each other and how well you listen to your teachers. I enjoyed watching you build your hospital and your pirate ship using big blocks, boxes, ropes and ladders. I loved your amazing dragon wings and the little snacks that you sneaked in under them! What a wonderful place that woodland is – so full of adventure and excitement – you are very fortunate to have such a special space.

I have asked your teachers to make sure that some of you have a go at listening to the sounds that are in the words we say; to help you to write them down and to give you some tricky things to work out using the numbers that you know.

I hope you carry on enjoying school, working, playing and learning alongside all those wonderful grown-ups!

Yours sincerely

Eithne Proffitt
Lead Inspector

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