

Ditton Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110957
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	325262
Inspection dates	27–28 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Anna Dawson

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act. The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	93
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr K Gardener
Headteacher	Mrs M Williamson
Date of previous school inspection	January 2006
Date of previous childcare inspection	February 2008
School address	Dundalk Road Widnes Cheshire WA8 8DF
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited seven lessons and held meetings with the vice-chair of governors, staff and talked to children and parents. She observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the centre development plan, the school's information and made observations to check children's progress, including support given to individual and groups of children, the school self-evaluation, the last inspection report and 10 parental questionnaires.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at the following.

- How effectively different groups of children learn and make progress, especially boys.
- The children's enjoyment of and achievements in their learning, especially their understanding of how to stay safe.
- How well children are prepared for their next phase of learning and to what extent parents are involved in helping their children learn.
- The extent to which the governors are involved in improving the school.

Information about the school

This is a 54-place nursery that is part of a purpose built children's centre, which opened in 2004. The nursery shares resources and works very closely with the staff from the children's centre, which offers full day care and out-of-school care for children aged from birth to under-eight years. The headteacher takes responsibility for the day-to-day management of the nursery and the children's centre. The children come mainly from the local catchment area, which is a mixture of owner-occupied and rented accommodation. Almost all children are White British and a few learn English as an additional language. There is a very small minority of children entering nursery with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, receiving support to improve their speech, language and social skills. The school has received a Healthy Schools award. The provision for under-fives at the children's centre was inspected at the same time as the nursery, but is subject to a different report.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features. Children achieve consistently well in all aspects of learning. They make good progress and their attainment is above that usually expected at this age, from starting points that are broadly as expected for their age. In their personal, social and emotional development, children attain highly and achieve exceptionally well.

Children have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. Outstanding safeguarding procedures and practice mean that children feel safe. There is excellent care, guidance and support for children so that, from entry, children understand the routines and develop quickly into competent learners who are independent, confident and work happily with others. Behaviour is exemplary.

The quality of teaching is good. The staff plan and provide a wide range of challenging activities each day, which take good account of children's needs and ideas. Consequently, children sustain their interest for long periods of time, during which good learning and development takes place. However, at times, opportunities are missed to develop language and communication skills. The curriculum is well-balanced for indoor and outdoor learning within the excellent and purpose built facilities. Visits into the community and visitors to the nursery, including local services, and the before- and after-school care on site enrich the provision greatly. Parents appreciate the range of services and the children extend their awareness of the community through these learning opportunities.

There is a good partnership with parents, who value the quality of care given to their children and the education they receive. Informal day-to-day discussions, home-school learning packs and newsletters help parents to understand the curriculum topics which form the basis of the nursery activities. However, parents know less about the achievements of their children day-to-day and are not able to become full partners in contributing to or building on their learning at home.

The leadership and management have secured good improvement since the last inspection. Self-evaluation is accurate. However, the detail in recording children's progress and attainments to inform future targets is not sufficiently rigorous and this

results in some children not making consistent progress in the development of their language and communication skills. The staff and governors work together effectively to secure improvement. This, with the good outcomes achieved by children, demonstrates the school's capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop further the ongoing records of children's achievements, to which parents can contribute.
- Ensure the centre development plan is more rigorous in identifying variations in children's progress and attainment by:
 - including more detailed evaluations of pupils' attainments
 - analysing variations in individual performance to set targets to raise performance.
- Ensure that the staff consistently promote children's communication and language skills by:
 - providing in-service training for all staff based on the language project that is in progress
 - stimulating more discussion with children during activities
 - ensuring questioning is open-ended to stimulate thinking and speaking skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

2

Most children start Nursery with skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age. A small minority start with levels of attainment that are generally lower than expected, particularly in language and social skills. Many make outstanding progress to achieve the learning goals expected by the time they leave at the end of Reception, in their personal, social and emotional development. In all areas of learning, which includes communication, language and problem solving and numeracy skills, children make good progress and their attainment is above that typical of four-year-olds. There is no difference between the rate of progress made by boys and girls. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which are mainly language and social difficulties achieve as well as others because of the good support they receive from all staff.

Relationships in the nursery are excellent between children and the staff. Children are very confident and independent in making their own choices of activities and taking responsibility for their learning. For example, they get out resources they want to use such as the colours and sizes of papers to use for painting and wash their hands and tidy up when they have finished. The caring and nurturing ethos of the nursery promotes equality of opportunity and access for all extremely well. The very few children who do enter the nursery at different times with little or no English learn to speak and understand quickly. They socialise very well and enter into discussion and ask questions as well as many others and are well equipped to participate fully in all that is offered.

Behaviour is exemplary, children know the difference between right and wrong and their enjoyment in coming to school is reflected in the fact that most attend well. Children develop a growing awareness of traditions and cultures different from their own through learning some words in French and celebrating major cultural and religious festivals. The staff teach the children about safety extremely well. Consequently, the children use resources and move around responsibly. This was clearly evident when small numbers of children rapidly learned how to ride a two-wheeled bicycle. Children enjoy healthy snacks, saying ‘they help you grow and are good for you’. Children’s excellent understanding of healthy eating deepens as they prepare some of the snacks and grow their own vegetables. Lunchtimes are pleasant and sociable occasions; children serve themselves and the staff talk to them about healthy eating. The food is of very high quality and is freshly prepared on the premises.

These are the grades for children’s outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Children’s attainment ¹	2
The quality of children’s learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do children achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do children feel safe?	1
How well do children behave?	1
To what extent do children adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do children contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Children’s attendance ¹	NA
How well do children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of provision overall is good. The quality of the teaching throughout the school is good, with some that is outstanding. From the start, the staff focus on developing children’s personal and social skills which results in their exceptional progress. Activities are tailored well to meet the needs of all children enabling them to enjoy their learning and achieve success. Effective provision promotes learning in the basic skills of problem solving. For example, during a role-play session, the ‘bus driver’ drove his passengers where they wish to go and sensitive interventions from a member of staff prompted discussion about bus travel routes and developed

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

vocabulary and thinking and understanding of one-way or return tickets, and the purpose of a map to guide the journey. However, in some other activities, practice is inconsistent and opportunities are missed to develop language skills, which slows down the children's pace of learning. For example, when staff do not stimulate sufficient discussion during activities, opportunities are missed to deepen children's thinking and develop their language.

Facilities are excellent and there is a good balance of indoor and outdoor activities. The outdoor learning appeals particularly to the boys' interests and needs because they enjoy the freedom and physical opportunities it provides. Children move freely between the learning areas choosing from a wide range of activities that interest and motivate them. Children have very good opportunities to explore the wider world from the visits and trips they make into the community, such as their recent visit to Walton Gardens and from the visitors that come into school such as the police and fire fighters.

The staff make good use of assessment to plan the next steps in children's learning. However, daily planning does not always ensure sufficient challenge to individual or groups of children or groups to develop their learning. This is particularly relevant in language and communication skills where the attainment of some children can be raised.

Parents say they can approach the school with any queries and questions. The staff know the parents very well and offer very effective support to families. Children's emotional needs are met straight away. The care given is exemplary and, consequently, the environment is happy and harmonious. Transition arrangements between the children's centre and the nursery are seamless. The out-of-school clubs are within the nursery building and run effectively by the school staff. There are good links with the local primary school and children are prepared well for their next phase of education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

There is good leadership and management of the school. The headteacher is successful in creating a team of staff who work together well to promote challenging and motivating learning experiences for children. The senior leaders have identified the overall strengths and areas for improvement well and involve governors, parents and children effectively in developing its aims and priorities.

The procedures and practice to safeguard children are outstanding. All statutory requirements are met, including checks on the suitability of the staff. The daily safety checks as well as the dialogue maintained with parents/carers regarding matters such as hygiene, medication, accidents and incidents ensure that children are kept extremely safe.

Although much discussion takes place about children's progress and attainment informally among staff, centre planning by the senior leaders is not sufficiently detailed in recording evaluations of children's attainment and progress. This limits the school's analysis for setting targets for improving the outcomes for children.

The school promotes community cohesion well. This is evident in the excellent partnership with the children's centre and effective partnerships with the neighbouring primary school and local services. Children are made aware of cultural differences by celebrating major festivals such as Eid, Diwali and the Chinese New year and enjoy a carnival day. There are strong links with a school in China and visitors such as the performance artist from Ghana, charity collections and visits made to shops and places of interest in the locality contribute effectively to the children's growing appreciation of diversity. The school is developing good quality plans to extend this work.

Partnership with parents is good. Most parents say they are kept well-informed about their children's progress through parents' meetings and newsletters. However, the daily involvement of parents in knowing their achievements of their children during the day and being able to contribute and build on their learning is limited.

The governing body has become more effective since the last inspection as they have become more involved in monitoring the work of the school. Governors have a good range of expertise such as in financial matters to enable them to hold the school to account, support and act as their critical friends. Resources are deployed effectively to meet the needs of the children.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents who were asked their opinions comment on the high quality of care given to children and their confidence in the school with comments such as 'the staff are very caring' and 'my child loves school'.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ditton Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspector received 10 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 96 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	2	0	0

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. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the children's work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- 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.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a child in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the child; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- 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.



29 April 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Ditton Nursery School, Widnes, WA8 8DF

I really enjoyed coming to your school. Thank you for making me so welcome. I enjoyed watching how well you played together. You go to a good nursery and some of the things you do are excellent. Some of the best things are:

- that you play happily together and care for one another
- key workers take very good care of you
- you know what is right and wrong and behave exceptionally well
- all of you eat the right things and take plenty of exercise to stay healthy
- you know very well how to stay safe.

This is what I have asked your key workers to do next.

- To tell your parents more about what you do in school so they can play with you in the same way.
- To help you think and talk more about the things you choose to do in school.
- To make sure the school's plan for improving learning gives your teachers all the information they need to help you do even better.

I hope you continue to enjoy your time in the nursery.

Best wishes

Anna Dawson
Lead inspector

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