



Ditton Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110957
LEA Halton
Inspection number 278559
Inspection dates 18 January 2006 to 19 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr John Heap CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Dundalk Road
School category	Community		Widnes
Age range of pupils	3 to 5		Cheshire WA8 8DF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 4244687
Number on roll	90	Fax number	0151 4228054
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Helen Brennan
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Millie Williamson

Age group 3 to 5	Inspection dates 18 January 2006 - 19 January 2006	Inspection number 278559
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

This is a 52-place nursery that is housed in brand new and purpose built premises. Currently, there are 29 children who are under-three and 61 who are under-five attending part-time. Since November 2005, the school is part of the newly formed Ditton Children's Centre. Children come from a mixture of owner-occupied and rented accommodation of different types. Levels of attainment vary on entry to the school, but are average overall. Almost all children are white British and they all speak English as a first language. An average number of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. None has statements of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that it is good and has some outstanding features. It provides good value for money. The school has gone through a period of significant change in relation to its premises and in forming part of a newly established Children's Centre on one site. Work with a range of partners inside and outside the centre is good. The headteacher has done well to promote and oversee the establishment of vastly improved facilities and ensure good improvement since the last inspection. In this, she is supported well by her senior colleagues and governors. As a result, leadership and management are judged to be good and the school knows that there are further developments needed. The school is well placed to make these developments, for example, in the move towards good governance and in broadening school development planning to include priorities for children's achievement.

Despite the upheaval, teaching and learning are good. The strength of the staff team has ensured that these young children are cared for and guided well. Standards and achievement are good, with children making significant gains in personal, social and emotional development and language. The excellent relationships in the school and the exemplary curriculum foster outstanding personal development of the children. Of particular note is the liaison with a kindergarten in China which has promoted such interest, knowledge and understanding among the children. As one parent noted about her two children: 'Both have had a wonderful, creative and exciting start to their educational career.'

What the school should do to improve further

Provision in this good school would be further enhanced by:

- improving school development planning, so that matters relating to achievement are included, particularly for boys
- developing the effectiveness of the governing body through
 - higher levels of monitoring, particularly in finance and children's achievement
 - increasing their input into development planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Although children's overall attainment on entry to the nursery is average, there is evidence of an increasing delay in language and social skills. Practitioners quickly promote good social, number and speaking and listening skills so that children become confident learners, with a rich curriculum on offer. Ongoing assessment of children shows that the majority are on target to reach above expected levels for their age in all six areas of learning. All the children are making good progress. However, it is apparent from the detailed tracking of children's achievements that girls attain more than boys. The school has recognised this position.

Across the school, children are aware of their own locality and the wider world. They have good skills in information and communication technology. Singing, dancing and role-play are strong. Good progress is made in physical development. Children jump, run and ride big toys in a safe and sensible way.

Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or come from minority ethnic backgrounds also achieve well. Any extra needs are identified early and the school is committed to catering for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. From their entry into school, children are met by a calm, yet challenging ethos. This is brought about by staff who are excellent role-models and who have high expectations of the children. Children are confident and secure learners who make particularly good progress towards higher levels of attainment in personal, social, and emotional development. Children attend regularly and parents are clear that school is enjoyable. An example of several parents' views is:

'My child is disappointed when unable to go on a Saturday and Sunday.'

Behaviour is excellent and children are willing and able to help each other. Attitudes to healthy eating and drinking are exemplary. Children show a lot of pride in their achievements and are able to talk about their work and how they did it. Most have high levels of concentration and stick to the tasks they choose to do. Children quickly become independent and self-sufficient learners. Their good basic skills complement their excellent attitudes to learning. Particularly noteworthy are the skills and enjoyment gained in information and communication technology. Through the exciting links with China, the children have an excellent view of life in another culture.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teamwork is strong and all practitioners make an effective contribution. There is a good balance between adult led and children's choice of activities. Detailed planning ensures that activities are well thought out, challenging and a spur to the imagination. Staff are effective role models, so the learning rooms are calm, thoughtful and reflective areas. As a result, children are confident and willing to take part. Staff know their children well, through formal and informal tracking of their personal and academic achievements. This means that they are sensitive to most needs and very patient in the way they explain things. Challenges are properly adjusted according to the needs of the individuals. However, there is some work to do to ensure that boys are fully stretched. Teaching promotes effective independent learning skills, which is a good improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. The team has settled well into the new premises and are rightly taking advantage of all it has

to offer. For example, in the very new outdoor education area, children are being stretched, both physically and intellectually. The strong links with a kindergarten in China has provided the children with significant learning about the world in which they live and in the way that all people have similarities and differences.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It meets national requirements fully and exceeds them in areas such as knowledge and understanding of the world. The programme is packed with an outstanding range of activities that stimulate and interest the children. Effective planning ensures that there is an exemplary match to individual children's needs. As a result, pupils make good progress in gaining basic learning skills and they grow in confidence, particularly in those areas where they are weaker, such as in language and social skills.;

The new outdoor education area is a superb addition to the resources and provides an exemplary base for learning in all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The biggest gains here are in personal, social and emotional development and the acquisition of healthy and safe lifestyles. Lots of visits and visitors greatly enrich the programme. Children's basic skills are well developed and information and communication technology is particularly strong. Children are well prepared for future learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff and governors are committed to ensuring children's health and safety. They promote children's well-being through, for instance teaching effective approaches to exercise, eating and drinking and through the good practices to minimise risks.

Children and their parents are pleased that the learning environment is a safe and secure one. Children learn happily and treat everyone with respect. Teachers can identify pupils' needs early and make effective arrangements to keep them engaged. Ongoing assessment and tracking of achievement are good. Increasingly, the needs of parents are being met and these include helping parents cope with the demands of filling in necessary forms. Equally, the development of the children's centre has led to a further expansion of effective working with other agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's development and this is shared by all staff and, in particular, senior colleagues. Much of the most recent strategic planning has been rightly focused on developing the new centre with its first rate premises and opportunities for joint working with other agencies. This work is not yet completed

but the signs are of generally good progress. A key factor is the clear ethos of support and consultation. All staff have a say and are included in decision-making. This means that all of the children are considered equally and that their interests are promoted vigorously. Daily meetings provide a very clear example of the staff's high levels of knowledge and understanding of individual children. Improved and more extensive tracking of children's achievements has highlighted strengths and some areas for development. For example that girls achieve more than boys. At present, this information does not provide a focus in the otherwise clear and detailed development plan. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body has much useful expertise in areas such as finance and health and safety. Their good support for the headteacher in these changing times has been important. However, there are areas for development in areas such as:

- monitoring, particularly in finance and children's achievement;
- increasing their input into development planning.

Financial systems for managing the budget are appropriate and benefit from the work of a dedicated officer. Resources are managed well.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I really enjoyed being in your school for a very interesting two days. Thank you for the warm welcome and help you gave to me. I found out a lot of things about your school and have returned home with lots of memories. I will try very hard to share some of the special memories with you in this letter.

I will always remember your excellent behaviour and the way that you help each other when working together. I was very impressed with the new building and particularly the outdoor learning area. The careful way that you ride your toys around the 'road' and look out for dangers is a lesson to us all.

All the adults in the school are very friendly and helpful. They work hard and successfully to give you a fantastic number of exciting things to learn. Your work about China was very exciting and, like you, I enjoyed a refreshing drink of green tea. It was obvious that you listen for a long time and that you understand what you are doing. Around the school were lots of good paintings and I watched on video many of you acting and singing really well at Christmas.

In addition to teaching you well, the staff are really good at showing you the best way to do things. So, they are kind, thoughtful, helpful and hard-working. Their example is helping you to grow up as very generous and caring children. You will be ready to go successfully and happily to your next school.

Mrs Williamson works very hard to make sure that you have everything that you need and deserve. She and the staff are rightly proud of the way that the new building gives you a better place to learn. They are also always looking for ways to make things even better for you. They are helped by the governors of the school, who are keen to become even better at what they do. I have asked Mrs Williamson and the governors to continue improving the work of the school.

Finally, keep working hard and getting on with everyone inside and outside your school.