



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection Report

SHERINGHAM NURSERY SCHOOL

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Reporting Inspector: HMI Jean Humphrys

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was
deemed section 12 (3) under the same act

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INTRODUCTION

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of Sheringham Nursery School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1	Very good
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Adequate
Grade 4	Not adequate

Description of the school

Sheringham Nursery School caters for children between the ages of three and five. There are currently 143 children on roll, a fairly average size for a nursery school. All children are offered a morning or an afternoon session and those transferring to primary schools attend both sessions. Twenty-seven different languages are spoken and over 80% of the children are just beginning to acquire English. Many families are new to the country and about a quarter of them are seeking refuge or asylum and they do not always stay in the local area. The school's assessment shows that attainment on entry is well below average in speaking English and below average in other areas of learning. The 30 children who have special educational needs receive additional support.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Sheringham Nursery School provides a highly effective education for its children. The school modestly describes its quality as good. The children who are in the nursery for three or four terms make good and often very good progress. They acquire English quickly and become confident and take pride in themselves and in their successes. The quality of education, including the teaching and the care for the children, is very good. Leadership and management are very strong, with senior staff dedicated to providing the best education they can for the children in their care. This is a school where every child and every child's family matter.

Grade: 1

Improvement since the last inspection

There were no key issues when the school was last inspected in 1999, but nevertheless the school created its own agenda for improvement. It has maintained its very good provision, has raised standards and has improved the quality of assessment.

Grade: 1

Capacity to improve

The dedication of the leadership team and the rigour and quality of the school's approach to self-evaluation indicate that the school has very good capacity to maintain its high quality provision and to build effectively on its successes.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

The school's agenda for improvement focuses firmly on raising standards. Inspectors agree that they should tackle this by:

- analysing the wealth of data gathered on individual children to identify how well different groups of children progress
- using the outcomes of this analysis to provide even greater challenges for high attaining children
- refining the school improvement plan so that its targets reflect improvements in the children's learning.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

The children make very good progress in the acquisition of English and at least good progress in other areas of learning. By the time they leave for their infant schools, standards in English are broadly average. The vast majority of children reach the standards expected in other areas of learning and many children exceed these. Inspectors and staff, who keep remarkably detailed and perceptive records, reached the same view of the children's progress and their standards.

When the children start school the vast majority of them speak little or no English at all. The school's very thorough assessment of children, often carried out in the children's mother tongue, ensures that their learning needs are diagnosed quickly. The staff use this information effectively to help the children to settle into the school's routines very easily.

Children increase their fluency and become confident speakers in their mother tongue and within three terms they communicate effectively in English. They are not fluent speakers of English, but they have a wide vocabulary and can hold a lengthy conversation with an adult. Their rapid acquisition of English is due, in part, to their excellent listening skills. The older children read and write their names and repeat stories such as 'The Three Bears' in great detail. They love books and many of the older children are almost reading them. Parents are delighted by this very good progress. The children's mathematical development is good. The older children accurately read numbers up to 20, add up and, as their parents say, they know colours and shapes.

Children love working with texture and colour and make very good progress as they learn how to work with paint. They describe changes in colour when they mix and they create intricate patterns when printing. In the outdoor classroom children whiz around the circuit steering cars, bikes and scooters with very good control. They are sure footed when they climb and persevere to improve their skills. 'I can't do this, it's hard', said a boy on the climbing frame. In response to the teacher's question, he thought of two possible ways to travel across the ladder that seemed so daunting. He chose one solution and was so delighted when he manoeuvred himself across the ladder successfully that he repeated this activity over and over. They learn to manage tools carefully and safely as seen when the children used scissors, glue and staplers to create containers. Children use computers well. They concentrate for long periods of time and work through the well-selected programmes they are given without adult support.

Grade: 1

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The school is proud of the progress the children make in all aspects of their personal development, and language is no barrier to the way these children work together. They play well alongside one another and children from all cultures interact happily. The children make choices from a range of activities, revel in their tasks and give them their wholehearted interest and attention. They are very good at fetching what they need and tidying away. Children are highly responsive to the very good behaviour adults' model.

They are conscious of the fact that they are part of the nursery community and have a part to play. They helped to write rules of behaviour and they try to follow them. One girl thought up rules for the children driving cars and drew signs to make sure the drivers knew how to behave. They were told: 'no dangerous driving, no speeding, stop at red lights and follow the arrows'. The children often show amazement when completing their tasks. The wonder and surprise on the faces of children who used a cutter to turn their sandwiches into gingerbread men made the adults who watched smile with pleasure.

The children's attendance is adequate once they have settled in the nursery and good as the children mature.

Grade: 1

QUALITY OF PROVISION

Detailed observations carried out by senior staff show teaching and learning to be good and more usually very good. Inspectors, on the basis of observing lessons, and talking with children and looking at their work, agree with their evaluations. The very good teaching, reported in the last inspection, has been maintained, and is a major strength. The staff are knowledgeable about the curriculum, use imaginative approaches to teaching, and make sure that all children, many of whom are at early stages of learning English, are stimulated

and excited by the challenging tasks they are given. Detailed lesson plans and careful evaluation of each child's learning and behaviour ensure that all the children make very good progress towards the early learning goals.

The staff's interactions with the children are of high quality. The use of carefully selected, open-ended questions followed by a timely pause that allows children time to think before answering is a distinctive strength of the teaching. Teachers speak clearly, help the children to participate in discussions and answer questions fully. Very good teaching in many of the children's mother tongues promotes their competence in speaking, improves their understanding of English and helps them to benefit from everything that the school offers. The school's very good quality resources extend the range of choices they make and enrich their learning.

A strong emphasis is placed on encouraging children to think and act for themselves. The staff provide well-structured opportunities for children to show initiative, express themselves clearly and take forward their ideas with confidence, for example through writing, imaginative role-play, enactment of stories, painting, construction and design. Staff share the children's enthusiasm and are genuinely proud of each step forward made by the children. This intimate concern for the children's learning makes children feel safe and self-confident. They are highly motivated to give of their best at all times. The staff make excellent use of the opportunities within every teaching activity, across all areas of the curriculum, to ensure new learning for children as well as constant consolidation of the important skills related to communication, literacy, and personal and social development. Teams of teaching and support staff work closely together to evaluate the impact of teaching on children's learning, and where necessary amend plans for the following week's work. The school is beginning to involve the children and parents more fully in the assessment of progress. It has started to track the progress of different groups of pupils, but is not yet able to identify whether there are variations in the progress made by each group. The procedures for assessing children's competence in English need to take greater account of the national guidance.

The school accurately believes that the broad curriculum offered is very successful in meeting the needs and interests of all the children. It is based on the national guidance for the Foundation Stage and teaching plans take full account of all the aspects of the six areas of learning. The school appropriately places a heavy emphasis on developing communication, language and literacy, and personal, emotional and social development. Carefully selected books from children's literature provide the 'themes' for the activities planned in the different areas of learning. The planned activities reflect the children's interests and help them to enjoy their learning and to achieve very well. During their last term, the older children are successfully prepared for transfer to their primary schools, through extra attention to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Parents value this highly and gave examples of how this has helped their children and children who previously attended this school.

The school provides very good care for its children, and some strong features of practice are identified in the school's self-evaluation. Records and discussions with staff and parents revealed that the school's provision is very good. The children's needs are carefully identified and kept under review. Strong links exist with local agencies, including the Sure Start team. The staff are well informed about the policies and procedures which protect children from harm. Several initiatives are in place to promote children's health and well-being. They include breakfast and lunch clubs and the provision of fruit and milk in school. A recent, major project on health and nourishment proved popular with the parents and children alike. It provided them with opportunities for discussing sensitive issues of protecting their children from the risks posed by substance abuse, and the problems of mental or physical ill-health amongst adults. Children's safety is given a high priority and the staff are vigilant and conscientious in their supervision duties. Excellent and trusting

relationships with the adults help the children to feel safe and secure. They speak their mind freely, expressing their fears, likes and dislikes. The learning environment is maintained to a high standard, with impressive attention given to detail in making it pleasant and stimulating.

Grade: 1

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The staff in Sheringham Nursery consider themselves to be an effective team and the very good progress the children make pays strong testament to that. The school's judgement that leadership and management are good is typical of the way the senior staff understate the role they play in the school's success. The school's consistently applied approaches to its work, particularly in teaching, provide children with a stable and secure environment in which to learn. The parents are full of praise for the extent of the school's care and concern for their children and they marvel at the way the headteacher meets them and welcomes their children, by name, at the gate each day. They feel that staff are very approachable and that the school responds to their views, even to the extent of organising a ladies fitness class and English lessons for them. They greatly value the way they are encouraged to support their children's learning by borrowing toys and books in mother tongue from the school's libraries.

The senior team, led by a reflective and thoughtful headteacher, provide stability and very good role models for all staff. They are committed to raising standards and they are eager to learn from experience and the practice of others. The school improvement plan sets out clearly the action to be taken, but does not sufficiently identify the ways in which the impact of these actions on children's learning will be measured.

Staff are sensitive to the school's place in the wider community and have carefully monitored and reviewed imaginative play to ensure that children were not turning to aggressive or violent play as a result of recent news stories. They are acutely aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their work and they constantly fine tune what they are doing. This sets very high expectations of staff and of children, to which they rise without exception. The senior team ensure that children are treated fairly and that what they provide enables all children to make very good progress. For example, those children who have not yet acquired sufficient English to converse with others are given special attention to prevent them from being isolated in their language.

The school has only just been given a delegated budget. Governors have set the budget for the year and have systems in place to check the impact of their decisions through regular monitoring visits. The chair of governors felt that when governors reported back on their visits to the nursery, meetings were enlivened and all governors were reminded poignantly of the main reason for their work. For all of these reasons, inspectors judge leadership and management to be very good.

Grade: 1

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