



Gracelands Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103135
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276854
Inspection dates 8 March 2006 to 8 March 2006
Reporting inspector David Rzeknik HMI

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Grace Road
School category	Maintained		Spark Brook
Age range of pupils	3 to 4		Birmingham, West Midlands B11 1ED
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 7723124
Number on roll	39	Fax number	0121 7724011
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Paula Daniel
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Angela Mason

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Gracelands is a small, popular nursery school situated in a deprived part of Birmingham. Its population is stable and all the children attend full time. Most are of Asian heritage, mainly Pakistani origin. The percentage of children whose first language is not English is very high. Around half are at the early stages of acquiring English. The proportion with learning difficulties is average. The numbers claiming free school meals is high. Attainment on entry is well below the levels expected for children of this age.

The headteacher has been on long term leave since July 2005. Two different acting headteachers and a senior member of staff have covered her duties since then. Its facilities are used by other services to provide part-time crèche and play sessions during the day and school holidays.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides good value for money. The inspector agrees with the Nursery's own view that it provides a good education with effective teaching and good quality care. The school's self-review procedures are sound. Development planning, monitoring of provision and lesson planning require improvement to be fully effective.

Children enjoy coming to school. They make good progress in all areas of learning although they reach below the expected levels for their age by the end of their first year. There are plenty of interesting things to do both indoors and outside. However, on occasions opportunities are missed to further stretch the more able. Staff do not always encourage children to talk in sentences, to further develop their speaking and vocabulary skills in English or their home language. Teachers are using computer and other technology suitably in class. However, children do not use it often enough.

Teaching is good and support assistants make a valuable contribution to learning. Relationships between staff, children and parents are very good. Parents hold the Nursery in high regard. They value the good support, care and guidance provided by staff. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their attitudes to work and their behaviour are very good.

The Nursery is effectively led and managed and is well placed to improve further. All of the issues raised in the last inspection have been effectively addressed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve development planning, monitoring of the Nursery's work and refine lesson planning so the more able are stretched.
- Improve children's speaking and vocabulary skills by creating more opportunities for them to talk in sentences in both English and their home language.
- Extend children's use of computers and information and communication technology across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children start in the Nursery their performance is well below expected levels, particularly in English, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. They make good progress in all areas of learning although they reach below the expected levels for their age by the time they leave. Progress in personal, social and emotional development is rapid in the first few months. This is because of the very strong emphasis that staff place upon helping children to settle in happily and to understand what is expected of them. Children's listening and speaking skills are developing well. However, staff do not always encourage children to talk in sentences to further develop their vocabulary and grammatical skills.

Children with learning difficulties and those who are beginners in English make good progress because their needs are well catered for. The more able achieve well but there are times when their specific needs are not fully met in some group activities. The targets set in the individual education plans for those with learning difficulties are too general and are not well matched to children's specific needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Children are independent, curious and really enjoy exploring the wealth of opportunities provided. They respond very well to the positive atmosphere and this spurs them on to give of their best. Behaviour is very good because of the high expectations and first class relationships. Children are encouraged to make choices and become independent learners. In play situations they follow their interests and are fully aware of the routines to keep them safe. They readily share resources, take turns and are sensitive to each others' needs.

Children's understanding of how to keep safe and healthy is good. They know that it is important to eat fruit and drink milk and water. Visits to the gym, park and outdoor pursuits centre encourage children to take regular exercise and keep fit. They take responsibility for their own safety when playing on equipment outdoors and take good care of resources and equipment. Children work independently and relate well to each other and to adults. These skills prepare them well for life-long learning. Participation in local events and fun days is helping children play a part in and make a positive contribution to society. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Staff plan sessions to include lots of stimulating and worthwhile activities that enable children to make good progress. There is an effective balance between child-initiated and adult-led work. The very good relationships and children's positive attitudes support learning well. In the most effective lessons work is pitched at the right level so all children succeed. Good support is provided by teaching assistants so individuals can achieve the lesson objectives. Teaching is stimulating and interesting resources are used to capture children's imagination. A good example of this included the use of puppets, a skeleton and a big book to help tell the story of 'The Gingerbread Man'. In the less successful activities, there is little modelling of the language to develop correct sentence formation. Work is over directed by the teacher with too few opportunities for children to talk at length.

Staff do keep a suitable check on children's progress but this information is not always used to plan and identify the next steps in learning, particularly for the more able. At

times bilingual staff effectively communicate using their home language to increase children's understanding and clarify their thinking, but this is not done often enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and includes many opportunities for enrichment, such as trips out and visitors to the Nursery. It enables children to achieve well in all areas of learning. The Nursery provides a very attractive, stimulating environment that contains good quality resources. A wide range of work is planned giving opportunities for children to follow their own interests both in and out of doors. Owing to the poor weather during the inspection, the outdoor curriculum was limited to play in the covered area. However, photographs and planning indicate that children have plenty of worthwhile and exciting activities to stimulate their curiosity and interest. Good opportunities are provided to develop communication and number skills across the curriculum. This said, insufficient opportunities are provided for children to work on computers or other forms of information technology in class.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The Nursery cares well for its children and provides good guidance and support. Children get off to a good start because the induction arrangements are very effective. Children with learning difficulties and beginners in English are given good support so they can take part in all activities. Child protection arrangements are sound and there is a designated member of staff who oversees arrangements. Not all staff have received appropriate training in this area. Risk assessments, particularly for educational visits and the school site, are carefully attended to. Robust staff vetting procedures are in place. This ensures appropriate checks are made on staff before appointments are confirmed. Partnerships with parents and other agencies are strong and impact very positively on children's progress, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are effective and have created a school where children thrive. The Nursery has been through a turbulent period recently with two acting headteachers in post since September 2005. The good work of the Nursery has continued despite the long term absence of the substantive headteacher. It now requires a period of stability, with continuity and consistency of leadership, if it is to move forward.

Morale is high and the Nursery runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The leadership has been successful in providing a good education for all pupils and in developing a climate where every child is important. For example, the additional support and guidance for the most vulnerable has ensured they achieve well. Workforce reforms

have been effectively implemented, and financial management is sound. Links with parents are strong and they hold the school in high regard.

Leadership has improved provision and has been successful in addressing areas of weakness, such as developing outdoor facilities to improve children's physical development. There has been monitoring of teaching but the school has not established a systematic and structured programme of lesson observations. Therefore, shortcomings in lesson planning have not been identified. The senior teacher, who has been managing the Nursery part time in the headteacher's absence, has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. She plays an important role in reviewing provision, but this is mainly from her observations while teaching. She is not at the heart of shaping the school's priorities or monitoring its outcomes. The improvement plan is satisfactory but lacks clear ways of measuring success.

Governors have only held delegated powers since 2004 and have ensured statutory duties are fulfilled. They are supportive but as yet do not sufficiently hold the school to account.

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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	3	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	3	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	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?	2	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	3	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

Hello, I am the inspector that visited your school. I am writing you a letter to tell you what I found out. Thank you for talking to me and for being so friendly. I know your mums and dads think the Nursery is good and I agree.

What I liked most:

You are happy and enjoy what you do

You are really friendly and very well behaved

I really liked the outdoor play area and seeing all the fun and exciting things you do. I liked the skeleton and hearing you name its teeth, fingers, hands and arms

All the grown-ups work hard to help you learn as much as you can

You take turns, share well and look after each other. You also took care of me and I liked your smiling faces. I have asked the teachers to do some things to make Gracelands even better:

When you talk to the teachers I want you to talk in sentences. I do not mind if it is English or another language you like using

I have asked the teachers to get even better at checking how well you and the Nursery are doing

I want you to use computers and other kinds of technology more.