



Atherstone Early Years Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125484
LEA Warwickshire
Inspection number 281944
Inspection dates 23 May 2006 to 23 May 2006
Reporting inspector Margaret Hulme AI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Ratcliffe Road
School category	Community		Atherstone
Age range of pupils	3 to 4		Warwickshire CV9 1LF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01827 713116
Number on roll	75	Fax number	01827 713116
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	10 April 2000	Headteacher	Mrs H Hurst

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 4	23 May 2006 - 23 May 2006	281944

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The nursery of Atherstone Early Years Centre (AEYC) (previously Atherstone Nursery School) was inspected by an Additional Inspector. The inspector met with the head of centre and talked with children, staff, governors and parents. There were 39 responses from parents to the inspection questionnaire representing over half the children on roll. In addition, 23 parents who use the Family Services of the AEYC also provided written views. Documentation was examined and discussed with the head of centre.

Description of the school

The nursery was designated as an Early Excellence Centre in 2002 and more recently as a Children's Centre and an extended school. The majority of pupils are white British and four are from minority ethnic groups. Only four do not speak English as their main language. The nursery provides for children with learning difficulties from its own resources as needs arise but has no children with disabilities or statements of special educational need. There are no 'looked after' children. The head of centre is new since the last inspection and a wide range of services at the centre work in partnership with the nursery.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding nursery is an exciting place to be and offers excellent value for money. A parent writing on a questionnaire said, "The nursery is fantastic. The facilities and standard of staff are both excellent. We travel some distance because this is an outstanding centre for the pre-school education". The recent period of great change from a nursery school to an early years centre and its tremendous success is testimony to its capacity to improve further, adapt and be flexible to the changing needs of the children.

Sensitivity, stimulation and autonomy are at the heart of the outstanding provision. Children achieve extremely well from a low starting point because teaching is excellent. Every communication adults have with children extends their learning. The excellent assessment procedures and tracking of progress mean that staff know what children need to learn next, and the purposeful play and practical activities keep children interested, extend their concentration and foster perseverance. All adults take part in teaching. The admirable teamwork is reflected in the consistency of approach that results in all children achieving success. Although the quality of teaching is even better than at the last inspection this is an aspect where managers' plans are incomplete. More structured checking of teaching has not been fully implemented because of building work but now that is finished, a more rigorous record of observations is planned.

The wonderfully caring and supportive atmosphere provides a firm foundation for children's personal development. Excellent relationships between children and adults are reflected in the trust they have in all staff. Children are secure and happy. They enjoy their learning immensely and badger parents to stay for lunch and extend their time at nursery. New parents watching their child tackle the trapeze and climbing apparatus outdoors were amazed at her determination and perseverance to overcome a difficulty. "They are doing wonderful things for her", they said. "She cries if she cannot come and just wants us to go home." Skills and competencies to equip children to work together in future include: making decisions, collaborating, negotiating and working together. They have a growing understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They are taught to respect the work of others. The orderly and harmonious community means that bullying is rare. Children show care and help one another. When handling recently hatched chicks, a child told her friend that, "they aren't afraid of us but you have to be gentle".

The outstanding curriculum offers children an immense range of learning opportunities, and planning ensures a good balance between play that is initiated by the children and teacher-directed tasks. The planning of the curriculum has improved the teaching and the staff rightly see this as an improvement since the last inspection. Staff are skilled at extending children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Outdoors, a child arrayed in gardening hat and boots, wonders why a spider tries to evade capture and is full of awe when watching intently how it begins to spin a web. Others try to dig and are gaining control of tools saying, "I like this, it's fun!".

The quality of care, guidance and support for each child is exemplary because of contributions from teachers, a considerably extensive range of support staff, governors and volunteers. It is at the centre of everything the nursery does. As new children join the nursery each term, there are always those needing a great deal of support and guidance. All adults are extremely effective in their supportive roles. Children have trust in the staff and make real efforts to overcome their difficulties. As the nursery services have expanded, its flexibility has allowed it to adapt to reflect changing needs. A partnership with the family learning programme, support services, stay and play group, community use of facilities and community outreach adds an additional dimension to children's achievement. These services help the nursery create integrated care and education. It impacts positively on their well-being and this in turn impacts positively on their willingness to learn. Parents appreciate that their children benefit.

The exceptional leadership and management stems from a strong caring head of centre who leads the staff team very successfully. Managers are exceedingly well informed, observant and perceptive. As is to be expected, the staff and governors have identified those practices in need of review and further development and those that need completion now that the extensive changes to buildings and services are finished. The good self-evaluation results in a nursery that continually refines its practice in the light of new initiatives and responses from children, staff, governors, parents and other early years agencies. The nursery knows itself well and despite staff agreeing about how effective it is and recognising that its top-notch provision results in extremely good outcomes for the children, the self-evaluation is too modest and there has been a reluctance to judge itself as outstanding. This stems from a desire that the nursery shall not become complacent and will constantly seek to develop further in ensuring that its children always achieve as well as they can. There is recognition that this aspect of leadership and management could be sharper.

The dynamic and inspirational leadership of the head of centre, the dedication and skills of the staff who share the same aspirations for the children, together with the partnership with parents and constant challenge from governors, are the most important factors in children achieving as well as they do.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

When children start nursery at three years old many have far fewer communication and social skills than expected. However, significant gains in knowledge and skills results in such good progress that within a year, they are well on the way to reaching the goals expected by the end of Reception Year in the primary school. Parents leave the nursery in no doubt about their satisfaction with children's progress: "I wouldn't send my child anywhere else; progress is excellent".

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

“My child always looks forward to going to nursery” and “I have been very pleased with my daughter’s social development and level of independence” are just two responses from parents to the children’s outstanding personal development and well-being. Very skilled staff help children understand the importance of listening, asking questions and what it means to agree or disagree with another person’s idea or opinion. The terrific outdoor area extends physical development very effectively because activities allow children to experiment and be physical without staff standing over them cautiously. Healthy eating is evident at snack time but plans are afoot to extend and improve these initiatives. Illness is the only reason that children are absent because parents know their children do better if they come every day.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Outstanding teaching and learning take place in the context of strong principles and values of fairness and respect for all. Teachers and the Early Years Educators who support them work in the same way with the children and all are involved in keeping track of their progress. Children’s learning is sharply analysed and the information gathered is used extremely effectively to meet the full range of children’s needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

A vibrant curriculum results from observations of children and is consistent across all services at the centre. A motivating range of practical activities, visits and play provides children with lots of experiences to explore, experiment and investigate. Children value the play activity, which was well illustrated by the child concentrating on producing a book about the story of Peter Pan. As detailed drawings emerged in the right sequence, the accompanying comments were, “I like coming here, and I like drawing and taking things home. It’s better than my last nursery. They lined you up and gave you beads”, she said.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outcomes of Every Child Matters, achievement, being safe, enjoyment, being healthy, contributing to the community and well prepared for future life are of paramount importance to the nursery. Staff, governors and parents know these outcomes have been central to the work of the nursery over many years. Child protection procedures are very robust. Advice for families about healthy lunches has seen many changes. Socially vulnerable children are identified and supported. With

greater security comes trust in the staff and a willingness to make efforts in overcoming difficulty.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Overall, the leadership and management are outstanding. Despite the nursery having recently undergone a period of great change, the leadership has ensured that quality provision, achievement, teaching and learning have been at least maintained or improved. A new head and a reformed governing body have very effectively met the challenges leading to successful development of the Early Years Excellence Centre. The head of centre is the driving force in seeking constant improvement and knows what needs doing and takes action. Almost all statutory requirements are in place. The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation is good but could be sharper. Building work has hampered the completion of some monitoring initiatives such as checking teaching.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	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?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	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	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	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?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	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	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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 had such a lovely visit to your nursery. Thank you for helping me and letting me join in your play. The nursery is such a happy place and all the adults look after you really well.

•You behave very well and play well with one another. •You make such good progress because you come as often as you can and your teachers give you exciting things to do. •Your mums and dads are learning how to help you in the nursery and give you interesting things to do at home. •You tidy up really well and make everything look spick and span, which makes other children want to use the toys you have used. •All the adults work hard to make sure you understand what you have to do and you try as hard as you can to draw, paint, build, climb and count. •You attend an excellent nursery and all the adults keep trying to make it even better. •All the building work gave the adults lots of extra things to do and they have got a bit behind with a few of their management jobs. They are catching up now and you have such a lovely new building to play in. •It is an exciting place to be so please try to help them as much as you can.

Thank you for being so friendly when I came to see you.