

Allens Croft Children's Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103130
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	286568
Inspection date	10 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Arnalena Bee

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jean McEwan
Headteacher	Laura Brodie
Date of previous school inspection	28 March 2001
School address	Allens Croft Road Kings Heath Birmingham B14 6RP
Telephone number	0121 675 2835
Fax number	0121 675 8111

Age group	3-5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Nursery in Allens Croft Children's Centre provides full-time education for children aged 3 and 4 years. The Children's Centre offers a wide range of extended services for children from birth to four years. Currently, the children are in temporary accommodation because a new Centre is being built with completion due in June 2008. Just over half of the children come from White British backgrounds and under half from a number of minority ethnic groups. About a quarter of children are learning to speak English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This Nursery is outstanding. Moving to the temporary accommodation has caused major upheavals but the headteacher and her devoted team have pulled together and not let it affect the quality of education that these young children receive. Excellent leadership by the headteacher results in very effective teamwork. This, and the total commitment from all the adults involved, is a significant factor in the children's outstanding personal development, sense of well-being and achievement. When children start in the Nursery, their attainment is well below that expected for three-year-olds. By the end, all children exceed the expected levels in their personal and social skills. This in turn enables them to take advantage of opportunities presented in other areas of learning where most children reach the levels expected and about a quarter exceed them.

Relationships are excellent and children are respectful of each other and polite towards adults. Within the exciting, very interesting and safe environment, confidence and self-esteem are nurtured in all the children do. Behaviour is excellent. As a result, the children move around, both inside and out, using equipment very sensibly and safely. Enjoyment is evident, with one little girl saying it all when asked what she liked doing best. 'Everything,' she replied. Being actively involved in preparing their own healthy snacks each day ensures the children become extremely aware of the necessity to eat healthily. Very good opportunities to develop physically encourage the children to learn how to keep themselves fit. Little jobs, such as dusting and polishing at the end of the day and when they are chosen to be the child of the week, enables them to develop an excellent idea of contributing to their community. Exciting visitors, like the local policemen, come in and develop the awareness of how the children can contribute to the wider community as they get older.

Care, guidance and support are excellent. The children feel safe and secure and know that all they do is valued. As a result, they develop confidence and flourish as they learn. Each child's progress is checked regularly. Assessment and the Nursery's impressive tracking system, which shows how well each child is doing, are used very effectively. Teaching is outstanding. Activities are very well planned, matched and adapted to meet the needs of individuals. Adults know the children very well. This knowledge provides an excellent understanding which is used systematically to build the next steps of learning for each child. As a result, learning is outstanding for all children, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The children who are learning English are particularly well supported and they learn as well as their classmates. The curriculum is good. The way visitors, and visits out, reinforce and enrich all areas of learning is outstanding. The Nursery has highlighted the need to develop the provision for the teaching of early writing skills and children's awareness of linking sounds to letters. This has got off to a good start. Occasionally, when offered activities that focus on writing or sounds and letters, higher attaining children are not always challenged sufficiently. Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. Nothing is too much trouble to ensure that every child's journey through the Nursery is of outstanding quality.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that when activities are focused on early writing skills or linking sounds to letters, higher attaining children are sufficiently challenged.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is excellent. By the time the children are ready to leave the Nursery and start in one of the many Reception classes they transfer to, they all exceed the expected levels for personal, social and emotional development. Most exceed the expected levels for physical development. In communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world, the large majority of children at least reach the expected levels. A quarter of the children exceed all of the levels expected of them. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to their classmates, as do the children who are learning English. This is because they are very well supported in all that they do.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Sessions at the beginning of the afternoon give the children excellent opportunities to lie on soft cushions in their family groups and relax as they listen to soothing music and reflect. They enjoy this and take part maturely. During other activities, they are regularly asked to reflect on what they have previously been taught. The awareness of different cultures and celebrations is very well promoted. A very well planned role play activity was observed where children began to understand that not all people use knives and forks when they eat. After a while, they confidently attempted to use chopsticks. The children's personal development is promoted very well in all that they do. As a result, they reach high levels in developing personal and social skills. Whatever activity they take part in, whether it is working with an adult or one they have chosen themselves, it is obvious from the enjoyment on their faces that they love all that the Nursery offers. They know how to behave and get on very well with each other and are very polite. Many children are very keen and eager to talk to visitors. The Nursery prepares them all very well for when they start in Reception.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Progress for the children is rapid because of the high standard of teaching they receive. Teaching is exciting and activities are very well resourced, interesting and stimulate the children very effectively. As a result, they sustain concentration extremely well, listen to adults carefully and try to do their best. Children were seen tracing pressed flowers very carefully as they worked with a visiting artist. Another group, working with a teaching assistant, was painting flowers using watercolours. Both tasks were quite difficult, but the adults had high expectations and gave the children very clear instructions, much encouragement and lots of praise. In return, the children looked carefully and persevered well to produce images they were proud of. Another very effective element of the teaching is the way adults initiate discussions to develop language and thinking skills. Consequently, language is developed very well in all the activities the children undertake.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Both the inside and outside area are used well to promote learning in all areas. Personal and social skills are developed very well in the good curriculum that is carefully adjusted to meet the needs of all children, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and the children who are learning English. The headteacher acknowledges that the provision for some activities that focus on developing early writing skills or making children more aware of sounds and letters does not always fully challenge higher attaining children sufficiently. Interesting visitors come into the Nursery, for example, the 'Intergenerational group' are ladies who come in regularly to 'knit and chat' with the children. Children try very hard as they have a go at knitting and enthusiastically sort and count knitted leaves that they then hang on a branch. It was obvious that this activity was thoroughly enjoyed by the children and the adults.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The children are cared for and supported exceptionally well. The very good selection of courses offered to parents, by the Family Workers, enables parents to become much more aware of what goes on in the Nursery and how they can support the learning of their children. Procedures are in place for securing health and safety and child protection. Very good links are developed with external agencies to support children with specific needs. The children develop really close and supportive relationships with their key workers and this plays an important part in the excellent progress they make. Assessment and tracking information is of a high quality and used very well to check how well children are doing and identify where additional support may be necessary.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and her assistant headteacher are a strong partnership that works efficiently. Both of them have an excellent knowledge and understanding of what is needed for these young children to learn very effectively. They have developed a successful staffing structure that enables information to be filtered down to all individuals. The work of all adults is valued and consequently, everyone works very effectively in a happy team. The headteacher has an excellent idea of the strengths, in particular, the quality of provision, as well as what could be developed further. Her recent improvements in the tracking of children's progress are very good and she is constantly striving to do better. Her enthusiasm and drive for 'the best' is infectious and transferred to all who come into contact with her. Issues since the previous inspection have been addressed and the Nursery has excellent capacity to improve even further. Governance is good. Parent governors' positions generally change each year because children are only in the Nursery for one year. However, the governors provide both good support and challenge. Nothing but the best is good enough for the children in this Nursery and because of this the children are very happy, confident individuals and achieve very well. Parents are very supportive of the headteacher and her team; as one parent commented, 'Our involvement has been a positive and magical experience.' Another parent said it all as she wrote, 'It is a wonderful, caring place where the children's needs are paramount, all of the staff are fantastic, the emphasis is on inclusion and parents' needs are considered and catered for.'

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 July 2007

Dear Children

Allens Croft Children's Centre, Birmingham B14 6RP

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to visit you recently. I had a lovely time and really enjoyed watching you do all the fun things you do in Nursery. I think your behaviour is excellent and I particularly liked the way you are always very kind to each other. I especially liked talking to you as you prepared your healthy snacks and watching some of you learn to knit. I think your Nursery is excellent.

I am writing to let you know what I liked best about your Nursery.

- ?
- You are very well cared for during your time in Nursery and your parents agree. ?
- You learn very well because teaching is excellent. ?
- The Nursery is very well led and managed. ?
- The adults plan exciting things for you to do and arrange interesting trips out and lots of visitors to come in and work with you. ?
- By the time you leave you reach levels that are expected for your ages. ?
- During your time in Nursery your achievement is very good.

I have asked the Nursery to do one thing to make it even better.

- Make sure that when you are doing writing or learning about sounds and letters you are all given activities that make you get even better.

Keep smiling and have fun as you learn.

Best wishes

Nina Bee Lead inspector