

Offerton Hall Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106019
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	287386
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Dee Brigstock

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	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Wilcox
Headteacher	Mrs Sheila Riordan
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001
School address	Half Moon Lane Stockport Cheshire SK2 5LB
Telephone number	0161 4565851
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Offerton Hall Nursery School serves a mixed, urban population with considerable socio-economic disadvantages and significant family need. It also admits children from more advantaged areas. It provides nursery education for 71 children of which 32 attend full time. These children have lunch in school. Nearly all children are of White British heritage with few from other cultural backgrounds. Two children are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. More children than usual have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, most of which centre on poor speech and language. The school is due to expand its provision when it becomes part of a Children's Centre next year. The school achieved the Basic Skills Award in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Offerton Hall is an excellent nursery. Parents wholeheartedly agree and are extremely pleased with how much their children learn and how much they love attending school. The school provides excellent care, guidance and support for children, including first rate partnerships with external agencies to safeguard children's welfare. As a result, children's personal development is outstanding. Children's achievement is excellent. They enter school with a range of abilities but with below average attainment overall. By the time they leave, three to five terms later, standards are above those expected for their age. Achievement in personal and social development, and in creative development, are particularly good because of the emphasis the school places on these aspects.

Each day children and their parents or carers are warmly welcomed by staff who have prepared a wide range of interesting learning activities for children to explore or complete during each well organised session. Children immediately go to their groups, sit on their own mats and sign in by 'writing' their name on a piece of paper. Expectations for excellent behaviour are set by this simple activity. After this they move to either choose their own activities to complete or to small focus groups. For example, during the inspection, groups of children made egg sandwiches, constructed bridges to carry the Billy Goats Gruff across a river, experimented with tasting goat cheese and milk, or listened attentively to stories. The excellent teaching staff, which includes teachers and trained nursery nurses, have first rate relationships with children and their parents. Staff plan different learning activities for all groups of children including the most and least capable. Those children with speech and language difficulties have extra, highly effective small group sessions which include an element of signing to aid children's communication skills further, resulting in outstanding progress for this group. More able pupils have their English and mathematical skills extended very well in other small groups.

Children's excellent achievement reflects the determination of leaders and staff to do the very best for each child. Staff make accurate assessments of what children can do from the time they begin the Nursery until they leave in several ways. The results of the assessments feed directly into teachers' planning and they make it easy to see how well children are making progress. Although assessments are very accurate, there is unnecessary duplication in these assessment processes, which take up a lot of staff time.

Leaders have created a good, innovative and varied curriculum which evolves according to children's interests while fully meeting formal requirements. It is enriched well by regular visits to places, such as a donkey sanctuary. The outdoor classroom is spacious, exciting and extremely well planned.

Leadership and management are excellent. The outstanding vision and knowledge of the headteacher fuels her determination to provide the best quality provision for children and their families in the local community. Each staff member leads an area of the curriculum plus another aspect of the school's provision such as improving community links. All staff provide workshops for parents, further cementing the excellent home/school links which already exist. The school's evaluation of its performance is entirely accurate. The governors' work is good. They are very supportive and involved well in discussions on the future of the nursery. Taking into account the school's plans for further development, children's excellent achievement and the work in the local community, the school demonstrates an excellent capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Simplify the school's assessment system to eliminate unnecessary duplication.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

By the time children leave the Nursery, standards are above average for their age, with particular strengths in personal and creative development. Children are confident and make sensible choices in what they do. When taking part in creative activities they not only have fun but also persevere at tasks and suggest ways of improving their work. This represents outstanding achievement over a maximum of five terms, because most children begin the Nursery with below average standards. The accurate match of learning activities to children's individual needs brings success to all children. Children who are at an early stage of learning English make very good progress because of the effective emphasis placed on the development of speaking and listening skills for all. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress, because work for this group, and for the most able children, is specifically targeted to meet their learning needs. Parents comment very positively about how well their children are doing in school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Excellent relationships exist between children and all adults. Several parents commented on their children's great enjoyment of school and how much children are valued by staff. Children are exceptionally well behaved and eager to learn. They get off to a good start in understanding how to stay healthy through having daily fruit and milk and taking part in simple cooking and tasting activities. The praise adults give increases children's self-esteem and pride in their accomplishments. Their care of each other and the resources in school are first rate and promote their understanding of how to stay safe very well. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They are developing a good awareness for their age of some festivals from other cultures, such as Diwali. Attendance is good. Most absences are due to childhood illnesses with very few parents choosing not to send their children to school every day. Links with the local community are outstanding. All staff regularly run workshops for parents in other local schools and colleges. Children take part in a good range of charitable events for their age.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding because adults plan creative learning activities which catch children's interest and excite them to learn. For example, children were asked to act out the story of 'The three little pigs' using masks and props to measure how well they understood the order of events in the story and children learned in a 'fun' way. All staff set a positive example to children who copy their good attitudes, and look upon learning new skills as a delight. Children's learning outdoors is so good because they have a lot to do in a beautiful, spacious, wooded area. They are well supported in their learning by adults who are actively involved in encouraging good learning. During the inspection, some excellent learning took place in constructing a 'water run' out of large equipment. Also, children independently access

a working microphone with backing tracks where they can perform songs on a stage, like a karaoke. This gives their self-confidence a real boost. Staff have a very accurate knowledge of what children already know because their assessments are so frequent. As a result, learning activities are finely tuned to children's learning needs. Sometimes these are delivered in very small groups, for example, in the form of mathematical games.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent because it excites children to learn so well. There are significant strengths in promoting children's knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development, personal and social development and in learning outdoors. The school has planned half termly topics but these are a guide only and children's interests, comments or other events can alter these leading to a curriculum that is led more by children's interests. As a result, the planned activities motivate children's learning very effectively. For example, one day when it snowed, staff abandoned their previous plans, and led children on a snowy day adventure involving building snowmen, tobogganing, eating hot, toasted crumpets and drinking hot chocolate. Staff plan good links between areas of learning. Both indoors and outdoors, children are provided with plentiful opportunities to learn to read and write in ways which capture their interest and imagination, for example, in writing a shopping list in the 'shop.' Enrichment through visits, for example, to visit a shop to buy the ingredients to make sandwiches, is good. These visits effectively broaden children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Procedures for keeping children safe are very rigorous. All children thought to be at any risk are monitored very carefully and vetting procedures for staff are secure. Risk assessments are thorough. The school has an excellent working relationship with external agencies to protect children. The school includes children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those with social problems, very well in all it has to offer. Throughout the nursery, all staff constantly guide children on how to improve their speech, language and early reading, writing, mathematical, social and personal skills; this contributes significantly to children's outstanding achievement. They are excellent role models for children. The results of accurate assessments and photographic records of children's achievements are shared with parents each term. In addition, the school produces leaflets and provides information on its extremely informative website on how parents can help their children to learn at home. This level of cooperation between home and school is an important factor in children's achievement. The school also makes excellent efforts to inform children's next schools of the standards children reach. Although assessments are very accurate, some information is duplicated unnecessarily.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher shows excellent leadership and management in continually finding ways to improve the nursery even further. In this, she works in a very constructive partnership with staff, parents and the local community. As a result of this good work, the school has a high reputation locally and parents support its work wholeheartedly. All staff take on areas of additional responsibility and support the school's community work very well. They each deliver

workshops for parents within the local family of schools. This work further enhances the reputation of the school.

The work of staff and performance of the school is evaluated and improved well through a thorough and regular system of reviewing the school's provision and through lesson monitoring. The findings from these observations, and the discussions which the headteacher has with each member of staff, result in focused professional development. The discussions also involve staff very well in planning for school improvement. The suggestions made then become part of the school development plan in which all concerned have an interest. Governors are well aware of all the options for the school's future and are very supportive of the school. However, they do not yet play a major strategic role in school development.

The school does an excellent job in including all children in everything it does. It works in a very constructive partnership with the special school next door and children from the special school regularly visit and play. This enhances children's personal development very effectively.

The school has a much larger than usual reserve of money. This is earmarked for a major rebuilding and refurbishment programme for when the school becomes part of a children's centre. The school's use of its current available resources is therefore limited.

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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	2
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	2
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?	1
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	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Offerton Hall Nursery, Half Moon Lane, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 5LB

I really liked being at your nursery school for two days. It was lovely to see you learning and playing with all the grown ups and with each other. You go to an excellent nursery and your parents are very happy with it.

These are the best bits.

- Your behaviour is excellent.
- There are a lot of different things to do every day and you really enjoy all the games and activities that your teachers get ready for you.
- The teachers keep you very safe and get other people to help you if they need to.
- You are learning a lot.
- You taste lots of new foods which are good for you.
- Your headteacher and all the grown ups really care about you and are always trying to find ways for you to learn even more.
- The outside area and garden are splendid. You have lots of exciting things to do, your stage is fabulous and your ladybird and frog umbrellas are great.

I have asked your headteacher to do one thing to make your nursery even better.

It is:

- to find an easier way of writing down how much you learn.