



Aughton Early Years Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106828
Local Authority Rotherham
Inspection number 287616
Inspection dates 5–6 December 2006
Reporting inspector Joe Peacock

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

Type of school	Children's centre	School address	Main Street
School category	Maintained		Aughton, Sheffield
Age range of pupils	3–4		South Yorkshire S26 3XH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0114 2872530
Number on roll (school)	80	Fax number	0114 2872530
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ms Bernadette Bartholomew
		Headteacher	Mrs J Turner
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–4	5–6 December 2006	287616

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The centre serves both a semi-urban and a rural area that has experienced the decline of the coal and steel industries over the past two decades. It is open for 48 weeks of the year and all the services of a children's centre are available, with children from three months to four-years-old attending. This inspection reports on the Nursery provision for children aged three to four. Some children attend full time and others for the morning or afternoon sessions. Almost all children come from a White British background. The number with learning difficulties is above average because the centre has an enhanced resource with eight places for children with significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The headteacher, with the support of a dedicated and experienced staff, has transformed a former nursery school into an early years centre of excellence and into this highly regarded children's centre. The nursery provision is outstanding in almost every respect.

Teachers and nursery workers make a formidable and effective team. Every aspect of provision is constantly monitored to ensure that children have a worthwhile start to their education. Children are carefully assessed on entry and their progress is rigorously tracked during the year. As a result, staff are able to plan an outstanding curriculum which very effectively meets the needs of all children. There are a number of initiatives already in place aimed at grabbing boys' attention and accelerating their progress in order to close the gap on the girls, who generally attain higher standards. There is a strong emphasis on promoting reading and writing skills.

The management of the provision for children with significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities is exceptional, enabling these children to make outstanding progress like all others. The excellent quality of teaching and learning and the exceptional curriculum ensure that children cannot wait to come to the nursery each morning. The well designed outdoor area is a real asset and is used in all weathers to enhance children's quality of learning in all curriculum areas. All behave exceptionally well as they have so much to do that interests them. They are closely supported in everything by a favourable adult to child ratio. The centre management committee has been replaced recently by a governing body. Governors are very supportive and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Most are helping to monitor the effectiveness of different aspects but they do not focus enough on identifying strengths and areas for development in order to help the centre to improve further.

The school is justly proud of its reputation in the community and parents are very appreciative of the outstanding care, support and guidance their children receive. Their wholehearted support for the nursery ensures that the personal development and well-being of all children is as outstanding as the school judges it to be. The stability of staffing and highly developed skills of the staff for this age range make a significant contribution to the quality of children's education. As a consequence, there has been good improvement since the last inspection and there is an outstanding capacity to improve further. The school is providing excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that governors are more rigorous in their evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The attainment of most children when they enter the Nursery is below that expected for their age, with boys performing below the level of most girls. Skills in reading, writing, calculating and in recognising shapes are identified weaknesses. Children use the exceptionally good outdoor area from an early age and, as a result, their attainment is much better in all aspects of their physical development. Staff expertise and a very favourable adult to child ratio ensure that all, including boys and those with significant learning difficulties, make excellent progress. Boys, for example, are encouraged to sit at the front of group sessions so that they are nearer to staff. Teachers ensure that they plan activities which will be of special interest for boys to hold their attention and make them eager to take part in lessons. By the end of their time in the nursery, a few children achieve the early learning goals. This is normally expected by children a year older. Detailed assessments on entry, mid-way through the year and at the end of the year clearly show the significant progress of all children in each of the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

'It makes you want to have more children' was a typically supportive comment showing how much parents appreciate what the centre does for their children. Many register their unborn babies for a place. Children love coming to the nursery and behave exceptionally well. Independence is promoted most effectively: children are allowed to make their own choices about activities, enabling them to follow their own interests. Children understand the importance of eating healthily and physical exercise. The close adult support successfully engages children, enhances the quality of their learning and ensures that all take pride in what they achieve. Attendance is usually very good but winter coughs and colds meant that more children than usual were absent during the inspection.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their cultural awareness has been improved since the previous inspection and most have a good knowledge for their age of Christian festivals and how Christmas is celebrated in different parts of the world. Children's social and moral development is outstanding because a whole raft of initiatives and strategies are successfully designed to promote these aspects. The Tusky nurture group is particularly successful in promoting children's social and emotional development. Staff are meticulous in ensuring that safe practices are followed and are quick to spot potential hazards. A recent Community Achievement Award recognised the welcoming nature of the centre and its contribution to the local community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

'Nursery is fantastic', 'It is a magical place for children', 'It is 500 per cent better than the other one my children attended': these parental comments speak volumes about the quality of teaching and learning provided by the experienced staff, who are doing such a brilliant job.

They demonstrate a high level of understanding of how young children learn, and clearly enjoy what they are doing. All plan together very carefully, taking full account of the particular learning needs of those with significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This ensures that all the children have the support and attention that they need to do well. Staff make very good use of the outdoor environment and use modern technology effectively to add interest to children's learning. Children complete jigsaws using the computer-based interactive whiteboards, for example, and enjoy watching the arrival of others when the video camera is relayed into the class.

The day-to-day observations made while children are working are extremely valuable. They not only ensure that work is planned to meet children's specific needs but also contribute to the exceptionally detailed assessment of children's progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Staff are deeply committed to providing the best possible education for the children in their care and are constantly evaluating the effectiveness of what they provide. All curriculum policies and learning objectives for each topic and area of learning have recently been subject to a thorough review. This has resulted in a well balanced, exciting curriculum which fully meets statutory requirements. There is good coverage of the key skills to be learned, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Children have access to a well-thought-out range of exciting activities, both indoors and outdoors, from the moment they arrive. The stunning outdoor area provides a wealth of learning opportunities for every part of the curriculum. Learning Makaton (communication through pictures) has recently been included on the curriculum to help everyone to communicate more effectively with children with disabilities. Asked what they liked doing best, most children were able to quickly say which activity was their favourite. One girl struggled and after much thought said, 'everything!'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Attention to detail and a staff united in their determination to care for and support all children to the highest possible standards are the hallmarks of the outstanding provision. As a result, children feel safe, valued and happy. All are given an individual learning plan to take home and their progress in meeting the targets on these are

reviewed each half term. Workshops for parents ensure that they too are in a good position to help their children to learn. Provision for all children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is highly effective because of the level of expertise of staff and the close support they provide within the nursery base, in the Sensory Room or in the Tusky nurture group.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management are responsible for the centre's success and the wonderful reputation that it has in the area. This has been largely provided by the dedication and commitment of the headteacher over the past 15 years. The expertise of the headteacher is recognised locally and is being used to support and develop other children's centres in the area. The experienced and long-serving deputy headteacher ably stands in for the two days each week that the headteacher is away from the school. The centre has a strong, representative senior management team which carefully monitors the quality of all the different services provided within the centre. The management of provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding with staff being trained and deployed very effectively. The school improvement plan very accurately identifies the priorities for improvement for the nursery base. Self-evaluation is accurate and reflects the high quality of the nursery extremely well.

Governors are very supportive and keen to help the centre move forward. Their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and they regularly monitor all aspects of the centre's work. Their reports, however, are too descriptive and not sufficiently evaluative. The centre is providing excellent value for money and the inspection confirms that the capacity to further improve is outstanding.

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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	1
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	2
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?	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.

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

Here is a good story for you to enjoy and it is all true.

Once upon a time, Tuesday and Wednesday to be precise, a man in a suit with a shiny head, grandad hair and glasses came to see what your school was really like. Can you remember seeing him? OK, what colour were his socks?

When he saw how much you all enjoyed playing outside with your spotted wellies on, he smiled, just a little smile, not very wide, but he was feeling happy inside.

He really enjoyed:

- watching you trying to hold on to the giant parachute on a windy morning
- watching you work on the computers
- seeing the girls doing their lovely writing and colouring. Come on boys, grab those pens and crayons and show what you can do! Bet there is a place on the fridge at home for your pictures and writing!
- listening to you sing, 'Going to Bethlehem, oh Yeah'
- seeing someone carefully Hoover the whole nursery when she had finished in the home corner

and best of all,

- seeing you make such a good job of decorating your Christmas tree!

It all brought on another smile, not too wide, but he was still feeling happy inside.

The cook's mince pies caught his eye and we now all agree that she is top of the tree when it comes to baking. Delicious yum yum yum!!!

Your mums and dads sent messages to tell him that your nursery was wonderful, superb, fantastic and even magical. Now that did make him smile, fairly wide, and. he was still feeling happy inside.

The man in the suit with the shiny head, grandad hair and glasses decided that he had seen enough and set off for home. He had had a wonderful time but his face was aching because he was still smiling! This time it was very, very, very, very wide because you had made him so happy inside! What a fantabulous, super-magical nursery you have. And what about your teachers? Aren't they simply the best?

Get ready for more visitors. All your governors will want to see what they have been missing!