



Chestnut Avenue Nursery School (Childrens Centre)

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113050
Local Authority Devon
Inspection number 289492
Inspection dates 21–22 November 2006
Reporting inspector Margaret Hulme

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Magnolia Avenue
School category	Maintained		Exeter
Age range of pupils	3–5		EX2 6DJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01392 255128
Number on roll (school)	67	Fax number	01932 491821
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Matina Mitchell
		Headteacher	Anne Barnes
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–5	21–22 November 2006	289492

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The nursery is part of a recently established children's centre. It is situated in an area recognised as having great social disadvantage. Most children are White British, with a few representing other ethnic groups. A few children speak English as an additional language. There is a high proportion of children with learning difficulties. The nursery is designated as an Early Excellence Centre because it integrates education and family services very well. A wide range of services at the centre works in partnership with the nursery, including support and advice for parents seeking training and/or work, and full day care through a partnership with a local neighbourhood nursery. The head of centre has been appointed since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The exceptionally high quality of education, supported by the care and extended services available at the centre, meets the needs of every child. This is an effective, efficient and inclusive nursery. The nursery's success is partly attributable to strong leadership and careful monitoring of children's progress. However, in addition to this, there is recognition that parents play an important part. All those who work in the nursery are eager to help parents understand how their children learn and how they can help them achieve well. Given their very low starting points and capabilities, most children achieve very well and make very good progress. When they leave nursery, most are well on the way to reaching the goals expected by the end of Reception Year in the primary school. The overall personal development and well-being of the children is outstanding. Excellent relationships with staff make children want to learn and they cannot wait to launch into play when they arrive. A fairly new parent said, 'My child used to cry every day but now he really enjoys the nursery'. The outstanding teaching and curriculum are effective in meeting the full range of children's needs. The first-rate assessment procedures and improved tracking of progress mean that teachers know what children need to learn next. A new system to check how well children respond to different activities is recognised as the next step in helping to see what works best in extending their learning and is recognised as an aspect for further development. Staff are particularly skilled at teaching early aspects of literacy and numeracy and extending children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Excellent teamwork results in all children achieving success. Care, guidance and support for children are exemplary. The trust in adults makes children make real efforts to overcome any difficulties. The nursery uses additional services at the centre to help families have easy access to care and education. This impacts positively on children's well-being and willingness to learn. The very effective leadership and management are successful in raising achievement and supporting all children. The head of centre's close partnership with senior staff, who have a range of responsibilities, enables the staff team to be led very successfully. The nursery knows itself well and good self-evaluation results in it continually refining its practice. However, it is too modest to judge itself as outstanding, as found by this inspection. This is partly because the leadership is always looking for ways to do even better and reflects excellent capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the work to check children's responses to the curriculum and determine what steps can be taken to extend children's learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Although a few children have average attainment on entry, there is a high proportion with either speech and language delay, communication problems, challenging behaviour or who need specific help in forming positive social relationships with adults and other

children. Overall, the achievement of all groups is very good. Three-year-olds make very good progress, given their starting points, and by the age of four are well on the way to reaching the standards expected by the end of Reception Year in the primary school, with still a year to get there. The few faster learners reach these standards before leaving the nursery. Slower learners and those with learning difficulties have such very good support from well-trained adults that many enter primary school without the need for a statement of special educational need. Inclusion is at the heart of the nursery's work and is an important factor in children achieving as well as they do. Parents who help their children at home contribute very positively to the very good achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's outstanding personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, contributes effectively to their very good achievement. Regular introductory sessions for toddlers who are going to join the nursery give them confidence to work with others and familiarise them with routines. Consequently, they settle happily. Attendance at the nursery is good because children greatly enjoy the activities. Small-group activities enable children to become independent learners. They involve themselves in activities which help them to become confident writers when making lines or symbols or solving problems. They are absorbed as they learn about floating and sinking when trying to 'rescue people in a boat'. Children take responsibility as they put materials back where they belong and help to clean up areas. They have very well-developed ideas about safe practices and ask visitors who they are and why they are watching them. Children enjoy regular exercise in outdoor activities when they move with confidence on the climbing frame and set themselves new challenges. They enjoy the wide range of healthy snacks and, during the inspection, were keen to eat the bread that they made. Overall, children's behaviour is good and most relate well to one another and sometimes help each other because the adults who work with them are such good examples. Although a few children find it difficult to maintain good behaviour, this is not allowed to disturb others because it is managed well. Parents express delight with the contributions children make to the community, such as visiting the local home for the elderly or preparing food to share with others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The excellent teaching is one of the main reasons that children achieve as well as they do. One parent wrote, 'Teaching is of a very high standard. I have found feedback on my son's progress exceptional and any questions and issues have been dealt with immediately and professionally.' This was echoed many times by other parents. They consider their children are learning well because they can explain what they have done

during the day. Planning is very good, with activities that are modified or extended for individuals depending on their need. This has been a major improvement since the last inspection. Exemplary teamwork has resulted in improved assessments and evaluations that point the way to the next stage of learning. Activities are more stimulating and challenging because assessment information is used better. Children's learning is sharply analysed and the information gathered is used very effectively to meet the full range of needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

This lively curriculum builds effectively on what children have already learned and can do. The weekly cycle of observing, evaluating and planning ensures that a range of practical activities, visits and play provides children with lots of opportunities to explore, experiment and investigate. Every opportunity is taken to extend children's literacy and numeracy skills. The freedom to explore the elements and appreciate living and growing things in the outdoor area complements the cosiness of the smaller-scale activity indoors. Children gain much from the visits to places of interest, which was well illustrated by a visit to a farm. A child who did not speak found the close proximity to animals so awesome that a few words were uttered, which has formed a good basis for further improvement in the child's speaking skills. The curriculum offers children an immense range of learning opportunities. Teachers' planning ensures a good balance between play that is initiated by the children and teacher-directed tasks.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The excellent links with other groups at the centre utilise support from health and social care particularly effectively. There is very good attention given to health and safety and robust procedures for keeping children safe. Pastoral care is very good. Problems at home are discussed and parents state that, 'Staff are good listeners and do not dismiss parents as unimportant – they recognise parents' contributions. It is not a case of "we know better"'. Academic guidance is much improved since the last inspection. Early assessment involves parents, beginning with home visits. Training for learning support assistants in how to observe children and record findings has ensured consistent approaches to tracking progress and noting significant steps in learning. Progress is tracked well but the nursery has identified the need to assess children's responses to the curriculum in more detail to enable better evaluation of what works best in engaging their attention and promoting learning. Those children with learning difficulties are identified early and supported very effectively. Special activities are planned for those children who are at the early stage of learning English and these extend their understanding and enable them to benefit fully from what the nursery offers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Despite the nursery having undergone a period of great change since the last inspection, the leadership has ensured that the quality of provision, children's achievement and teaching and learning have been improved. The head of centre and a governing body with extended responsibilities have very effectively met the challenges leading to successful development of the Early Excellence Centre. Some governors are using their skills very well, such as taking responsibility for the efficient and effective use of funds. Managers are exceedingly well informed, observant and perceptive. The nursery continually refines its practice in the light of new initiatives and responses from children, staff, governors and parents. When it became evident that observations of children and subsequent assessment was inconsistent, the senior staff set up training which gave everyone the confidence to do it well and use the information effectively to extend learning. The introduction of a nursery plus group stemmed from a raised awareness that some children would encounter difficulties when starting primary school. The nursery plus sessions have been instrumental in enabling these children to overcome difficulties. Parents too are supported to help children experience a successful transition. Senior managers are keen 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.

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	2
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	2
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

I did enjoy my visit to the nursery. Thank you for helping me and talking to me about your play. The nursery is an exciting place to be and all the adults look after you very well. I saw that you enjoy school very much and you cannot wait to try out all the play activities. You concentrated hard to make the bread and used the peelers very carefully when cleaning vegetables to make soup. I can see why you all love the outdoor area with so many exciting things to do. Most of you behave well and play well with one another but a few of you still need the adults to help you. You make such good progress because you come as often as you can and your teachers give you exciting things to do. Your teachers check how well you are doing and are going to start finding out what sort of things you enjoy most and what helps you to learn best. Your mums and dads are learning to help you with interesting things to do at home. You tidy up really well and make everything look spick and span. You attend an excellent nursery and all the adults keep trying to make it even better so please help them as much as you can.