

Heath Lane Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117070
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	290710
Inspection date	12 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3-4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Jameson
Headteacher	Mrs A Bratton
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002
School address	Heath Lane Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP1 1TT
Telephone number	01442 255 418
Fax number	01442 255 939

Age group	3-4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized nursery school. Nearly all children are from White British backgrounds, and a small number are from minority ethnic groups. Most children start school with levels of knowledge and understanding that are in line with national expectations. The proportion of children with learning difficulties is below the level expected. The percentage of children entitled to claim free school meals is below average. A few children are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The school has recently been given an award for information and communication technology (ICT).

The children's club has separate purpose built buildings and offers breakfast, after school activities, full day care for three to five year olds and holiday sessions.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Heath Lane Nursery is an outstanding school and gives excellent value for money. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, senior management team and governors ensures that children's progress is as important as their enjoyment. This ensures that children's achievement is excellent and standards are significantly above average by the end of the nursery year. From a starting point which is broadly average, children make particularly good progress. Children of all abilities achieve extremely well.

The school's leadership has established an outstanding partnership with parents. All of the parents who returned questionnaires were totally positive in their responses. One parent wrote, 'This is an excellent nursery. My son loves going and is flourishing under the care of the staff. I would highly recommend it to any parent looking for a nursery school in the area.' The leadership of the school places a great deal of importance on working with the community and a particularly good partnership is in place. This means that the school works extremely effectively to unite the local community. For example, children can now attend a good breakfast club and child care provision on the site which allows parents to leave their children in safe hands outside school hours.

Children's personal development is outstanding and most behave excellently because they receive outstanding care, guidance and support from staff and senior leaders. Children's enjoyment in all nursery activities is extremely clear and is seen in their work and play. They say they like all the activities on offer and especially enjoy using the interactive white board. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent because of the exceptionally rich and exciting learning activities planned.

Teaching and learning are excellent. This is mainly because teachers have high expectations of children. Effective teaching methods mean that children often learn through practical activities. All staff are used effectively to teach group activities. Teachers use assessment well but advice for children is not always specific and does not consistently explain what they have done well. This means that children do not have regular feedback about how they have been successful.

Outstanding leadership and management have brought about particularly effective development since the last inspection. There were no key areas for improvement from the last inspection but the school has continued to develop and it uses self-evaluation exceptionally well. The use of ICT with the children has improved significantly. The tracking, monitoring and evaluation of children's progress and attainment are excellent. As a result of all these improvements the school has an outstanding capacity to improve in the future. The school's leadership is aware that records of achievement do not consistently contain specific criteria for assessment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop children's records of achievement to include more specific criteria for assessment.
- Improve teachers' use of specific feedback to children so that they know how they have been successful.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. Standards are significantly above those expected by the end of the nursery year. Children make exceptionally effective progress from a broadly average starting

point. Evidence from the school's tracking system shows that two out of three children make extremely good progress. The children who are learning to speak English as an additional language make particularly good progress because of the teachers' expertise in developing children's communication skills. Children who have learning difficulties are supported very effectively so they achieve really well. Higher attaining children make extremely good progress and a considerable proportion are working at above expected levels of knowledge and understanding. Children are well prepared for the next stage of education and their future lives because their basic skills are effectively developed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and well-being are excellent because staff manage them very calmly and thoughtfully. Children thoroughly enjoy coming to the nursery and their attendance is very good. They talk about their thoughts, feelings and ideas exceptionally well in regular discussion sessions. Children contribute to the community effectively and raise money for many charities. They have raised money for a school in Africa. Children learn how to help each other thoughtfully, and about the ways they can assist others to do their jobs. They know how to keep themselves safe extremely well and are aware that they need to wear sun hats outside when the sun is strong. This is partly because the leadership of the school places such a high level of importance on this area. Their adoption of healthy lifestyles is good. For example, children enjoy physical activities most days because of the super outside areas, and they eat fruit or vegetables every day.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding because teachers use effective methods which challenge children very effectively. This ensures that children make exceptional progress. Sessions are planned extremely well so that time is used particularly well. Learning objectives are very effectively displayed beside some areas such as the water tray so that adults coming into the nursery can reinforce children's learning. Teachers use questioning extremely effectively to deepen children's understanding. The teaching of children who find learning harder is particularly well matched to their needs. Their individual education plans are particularly good and contain specific and measurable targets. Children's rate of learning is exceptionally good because resources are used imaginatively. The way the resources are organised effectively encourages children to become independent learners. Teachers' use of assessment is good but the use of feedback is not consistently effective and specific in telling children how they have been successful. This means that children are not gaining knowledge on a regular basis about their strengths.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Learning activities are exceptionally well planned and this supports children's excellent achievement. A rich and varied range of activities has been organised for the whole year. Children develop their understanding of their own and other cultures extremely effectively because the school plans projects which cover many areas of learning at one time. The school

links areas of learning together very well so that children learn to connect their knowledge. Extremely stimulating and high quality displays in classrooms and around the school celebrate children's achievements. Good use of ICT means that children enjoy the activities while learning key skills. Gifted and talented children are well provided for. Minority ethnic children are involved in all activities excellently so they make exceptionally good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school offers excellent care and support to its children. This is evident in the guidance staff offer children. The children's personal needs are extremely well looked after. Children are taught in small groups of ten, by one key person for a term at a time and this ensures that they form very secure relationships with staff and other children. Staff ensure children's health and safety excellently. For example, shaded areas are provided outside for children to work under. Children's academic progress is reviewed regularly by staff. Children's targets are reviewed every term and new ones are set with parents during consultation sessions. This is helping to promote even better progress. Children's transition to the primary school is handled effectively. All the requirements for safeguarding children's welfare are met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher is particularly astute and forward thinking. She heads a very effective senior management team united in its aim to provide the highest quality education. The leadership of the school places a great deal of importance on the integration of children from all backgrounds so they learn to work together extremely well regardless of their ethnic origins and their abilities. Any racial incidents are logged effectively but none have occurred in the last year. The school achieves excellent racial harmony. The coordination of children who find learning difficult is very good and their attainment is carefully monitored. Parents are very pleased with the education their children receive. One parent says, 'We have been exceptionally happy with the provision at Heath Lane. Our daughter's use of language and recognition and formation of numbers or letters has really improved in recent weeks.' Senior leaders are effectively involved in self-evaluation and are keen to develop provision for areas of learning to even higher levels. The school development plan sets specific targets for improvements in standards and children's progress. The governing body has an outstanding understanding of the school's work and is able to hold it to account extremely effectively.

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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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

12 March 2007

Dear Children

Heath Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. HP1 1TT

Thank you for welcoming us into your school. We enjoyed watching sessions and talking to you. It was interesting to talk to your teachers and some of the governors. You are lucky to attend such an excellent school. There are many wonderful things about your school.

- You enjoy all the super activities.
- Your behaviour is amazingly good.
- Your headteacher has very effective ideas about how to improve the school.
- Teaching is excellent and teachers work hard to make lessons interesting.
- Teachers and staff care for you very well.

We have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. These are the most important things.

- Making sure teachers tell you what you have done well.
- Improving assessment records so that they have more specific targets.

Keep working hard and enjoying the many things you do at Heath Lane Nursery School.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Jackie Cousins Lead inspector