



Oxhey Early Years Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117077
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290714
Inspection dates 27–28 February 2007
Reporting inspector Paul Cosway

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Oaklands Avenue
School category	Community		Oxhey
Age range of pupils	3–5		Hertfordshire WD19 4RL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01923 330300
Number on roll (school)	80	Fax number	01923 330301
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Anna-Marie Jacob
		Headteacher	Mrs Cathy Gunning
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–5	27–28 February 2007	290714

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Oxhey Early Years Centre is an above average-sized nursery which includes child care and pre-nursery provision, as well as a range of extended services for local families. In addition to the children registered as attending the nursery, there is day care provision for 24 two-to-three-year-olds and a 24 place wrap-around provision. This additional provision is run by Oxhey Early Years Centre LTD, managed by the school and registered as a charity. The local population served by the school represents a wide mix of social backgrounds and it serves an area on the outskirts of Watford which includes relatively expensive housing as well as areas of deprivation. On entry, children's attainment is generally at the standard expected for their age. Pupils are mostly of White British heritage. A few children are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good nursery which is improving rapidly. It has some outstanding aspects, especially in the quality of the curriculum and the ways in which it develops children's social skills and their independence. It gives good value for money.

The many parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire were unanimous in their praise for the school. 'It is a fantastic nursery,' one wrote. Others comment on how much the children love coming to school. The nursery is developing into an innovative children's centre, offering support for families who need help as well as meeting a wide range of needs of children from a very early age. Support, care and guidance are excellent, as parents recognise: 'The nursery does everything to ensure a happy childhood and supports parents through difficult times.' Academic guidance is good.

The curriculum is outstanding, offering a wide range of stimulating activities for children which enable them to learn happily through play. Teaching is generally good and occasionally excellent, with adults giving good individual support to children and extending their understanding through excellent conversation and questioning. As a result, children achieve well. They join the nursery with standards in line with those expected for children of their age and leave it with above average standards. The individual profiles for each child provide good records of their progress. The nursery has adopted a new system for centrally tracking children's progress and, although this is not yet providing reliable data, individual children's records are accurate.

The children are very happy and safe and enjoy the activities so much that they find learning exciting. Staff are sensitive to their needs, modifying activities to reflect the children's individual interests. Behaviour is excellent and the children relate very well to adults and to one another. They learn to make decisions and are responsible and sensible. They know how to be healthy and contribute very well to the nursery and to the wider community and are well prepared for their future economic well-being. The nursery is a very warm and welcoming place for children and their parents. Resources are excellent and children are given an exciting and magical introduction to learning.

The leadership and management of the centre are good overall. A new management structure is being put into place in recognition of the expansion of the nursery's role within the community. Some appointments have only recently been made but already many of the post-holders are functioning well. The headteacher's management is outstanding. She is an inspirational leader, with considerable vision, and an excellent manager of her staff. In just over a year, she has successfully brought about significant changes and the quality of provision has improved markedly since the last report.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the central records of children's progress so that they accurately reflect their achievement during their time in the nursery.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children start nursery with abilities in line with expectations for their age. Their achievement during their time in the nursery is good and many reach standards beyond those expected for their age by the time they leave. They make good progress because the arrangements to help them settle quickly and happily into the school are excellent and the stimulating and enjoyable activities make learning a delight.

Children make particularly good gains in developing their creative skills. They design, cut, draw and use colour to a high standard so that their art work is a pleasure to see. The progress that they make in their personal and social development is also outstanding. They make good progress in mathematics. Their speaking and listening skills are developed excellently through continuous interaction with adults which extend and challenge them to reach high standards. Their achievement in physical development and in knowledge and understanding of the world is also good. The development of early reading and writing skills is good. Children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children are exceptionally happy in the nursery and eager to attend. Their behaviour is usually outstanding and they co-operate very well in small group activities. They show excellent self-discipline and are responsible and careful when using equipment that could hurt others, such as scissors and large tricycles. They play together well and soon resolve any conflicts or problems.

They develop a sense of self-worth because the adults are so quick to respond to their suggestions or ideas. A child's sudden need to attend hospital led to a hospital play area being set up and an excellent range of activities devised for it. The arrival of a Cantonese-speaking boy was celebrated by the teaching of Cantonese as part of a cookery session, helping him to fit in and feel valued. Children make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because of the ethos of care and wonder that permeates the nursery. They enjoy the opportunities to prepare food and eat healthily and love the many physical activities, such as digging and cycling. They take responsibility for getting the resources they need and tidying them away. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teaching of communication and language, mathematical development, physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world is good. The opportunities

planned for children's personal and social development and for their creative development are outstanding and result in excellent personal development, and art and design work of a high quality. The ways in which all adults talk to children, engaging them in meaningful conversation about what they are doing and their feelings are key strengths. Children love being constantly challenged, thanks to the informal and pleasant style of the teaching

The activities that teachers plan for children are always interesting and stimulating, encouraging them to take part and enjoy learning. Staff use a wide range of resources to enhance the children's experiences and to make learning real - such as using pennies and cakes to bring a counting song to life. They assess individual children's progress regularly and keep good records. Limited use is made of information and communication technology to help children to learn, but more equipment is being ordered to expand this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is very carefully planned to give an excellent range and balance of activities, covering all the areas prescribed for this age-group. The children learn through play: some activities being child-led and others initiated by adults. Children can choose to move from one activity to another to hold their interest, but their progress is carefully monitored to ensure that each child has a balance of experiences. An excellent range of resources, indoors and out, is used to support the curriculum and most small group activities have an adult present to ensure that the children gain the maximum benefit from them. Outside visits and regular visitors and the exciting range of learning environments in the school, such as the 'allotment' and the 'building site', mean that the curriculum is always exciting and meets the needs of all very well indeed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding care that the school provides underpins the children's learning and makes a major contribution to their personal development. The school's partnership with external agencies is excellent and helps to ensure that children and their parents feel confident and secure. Children who have special educational needs receive very appropriate individual support and care and make good progress as a result. The support that the centre provides is fully integrated, including day care, parenting guidance and baby massage. Children move freely and seamlessly from the very well organised nursery education to the other areas of the centre through the day, still maintaining contact with the same key adults. The school's procedures for managing behaviour are very effective. The regular assessment of the children's achievements, carried out as they take part in activities, is of a high standard and the children's individual records are good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The nursery is going through a period of rapid change as it moves to become a key children's centre for the local community. A centre manager has been appointed but, at the time of the inspection, had not yet taken up his post. The new management structure, although embryonic, is already working satisfactorily and the centre runs smoothly. Overall, leadership and management are good, backed by an enthusiastic governing body which is challenging and supportive. The key to why the centre has adapted so well to the rapid changes that it is undergoing is the inspirational leadership of the new headteacher. She has managed the work force with sensitivity and considerable skill. Her leadership has provided the vision that has taken them forward whilst her concern and care for every individual have ensured that the staff has bonded with her as a supportive and innovative team, including those who have been long in post and initially felt uncertain in the face of change.

The improvements since the last inspection, in the accommodation, for example, and the quality of teaching, have been excellent and the school is very well placed to continue to improve.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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?	2
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 February 2007

Dear Children

Oxhey Early Years Centre, Eastbury Road, Watford, Hertfordshire DW19 4RL

Thank you very much for all the help you gave to me when I visited your nursery. I really enjoyed talking to you and joining in your play. You told me that it is fun to learn at your school and I agree. These are some of the things that make this such a good nursery.

- Your teachers plan interesting and exciting activities for you.
- Your headteacher and all the staff are doing an excellent job in improving the nursery and making it an even better place for you.
- Your behaviour is excellent. You get on very well with each other.
- The ways that you are supported and cared for really help you to make good progress.

I have suggested that more work on assessment will help make the nursery even better.

Thank you again for being so kind and helpful. One of your parents wrote to me: 'This is a fantastic nursery', and I agree!

Best wishes for the future

Paul Cosway

Lead Inspector