

Longshaw Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119084
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	291309
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Jennie Platt

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	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Mrs Florence Oldfield
Headteacher	Mrs Jean Bennett
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2001
School address	Crosby Road Blackburn Lancashire BB2 3NF
Telephone number	01254 698832
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Age group	3–4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The nursery provides education for children aged three to four years who attend part time for either a morning or an afternoon session. Children attend for between three and five terms according to their date of birth. The school serves an area of social and economic disadvantage. Almost all of the children come from White British families with a small number from minority ethnic background who are at an early stage of learning English. Nine children are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a very small number are looked after children. Most children start school with low levels of attainment especially in social skills and speaking and listening. The nursery is part of a Children's Centre which offers family support as well as care for children from birth to three years. The nursery and the children's centre are run as one unit under the same management team and governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Longshaw Nursery School provides a good education with some outstanding features. It is a wonderful place for children to start their education. The curriculum is outstanding and leads to children really enjoying school. One parent captures parents' views in the comment 'teachers create a variety of brilliant activities for the children to keep them stimulated and interested'. At the heart of the school's success is the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. She is successful in promoting the needs of the children and is highly respected by all involved with the school. With the support of governors and staff she has successfully led the school during the development of the combined Longshaw Nursery and Children's Centre. Full advantage has been taken of this transformation and excellent relationships established with other agencies to the benefit of parents and children.

In response to effective teaching, children make good progress from their low levels of attainment when they start at the school, although they do not quite reach the level that is typical for their age when they transfer to full time education. The school's records show that the children's achievement is better in personal and social development and this reflects the very good attention given to this aspect of their development. Children learn that marks represent meaning but teachers do not always encourage the more able to initiate their own writing so that they could achieve more. All staff have a really good understanding about the needs of these young children and activities are based on fun and investigation. Children learn to make choices and grow in independence. This, combined with their increasing basic skills, prepares them well for the Reception class.

Children's personal development is excellent. They are very well behaved and show an ability to concentrate on a task for a good length of time. 'Sticky Kids' includes very energetic exercises and is just one imaginative activity which contributes to the children's excellent understanding of keeping healthy. They enjoy exercise and the fresh air. Children already understand how to play a role in the school and wider community. They support each other, sing for the elderly and raise funds for charity.

This is a very caring school and effective systems are in place to ensure children learn in a safe environment. Children relate very well to their key worker and know someone is always at hand to help. The tracking of children's progress is good, but not enough use is made of the available information when checking on the overall performance of the school or setting future priorities. Children really love school because of the excellent curriculum. Every day new activities are provided and children rush off to try out the latest experiment or game. A very wide range of visits and visitors adds real excitement to children's experiences.

Leadership and management are good. Significant changes to planning and organisation are discussed jointly by staff and the team approach to decision making is a strength of management. Consequently, the school has made good progress since the last inspection. The school provides good value for money. It is well placed to improve further because of the accurate self-evaluation of its effectiveness and the driving force of the headteacher that ensures changes lead to improvements for the children and the community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Analyse the available assessment information to evaluate the overall achievement of the children and to identify more precisely what needs to be improved.

- Boost writing skills for the more able children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children make good progress from a low starting point although standards are slightly below what is typical for this age when they start full time education. They achieve very well in personal and social development and become effective learners. This has a positive effect on their achievement in other areas of learning. Children enjoy listening to stories and often sit and share a favourite story with an adult or a friend. Most are making a good attempt at writing their name but the more able children do not always take the opportunity to initiate writing and some could work at a higher level. The imaginative opportunities for role play make a significant impact to achievement in creative development. The boat and railway station are real favourites and children take on the role of different characters. Although some, including those learning through English as an additional language, lack the vocabulary to play a full part they enjoy dressing up and know the names of the animals chosen.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those seen as more vulnerable make good progress because their needs are identified swiftly and advice and support sought promptly to enhance their learning. The small group of children who are at the early stages of learning English settle well and make good progress because staff take time to check they understand what is expected of them and play a full part in all activities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development is excellent and has a very positive impact on learning. Children feel secure and are stimulated by the rich variety of activities on offer. Every day they arrive to a new variety of tasks. This captures their interest so that they happily separate from adults and move quickly to an activity or run to greet a member of staff or a friend. Children enjoy being at nursery and attend regularly. They grow in confidence because staff encourage them and offer ample praise. Most develop high levels of independence and eagerly take responsibility for small duties. It is amazing to watch the response to the signal to tidy away at the end of a session. Behaviour is good. A few misbehave when unsupervised but are promptly spotted by staff and calmly told that this is not what happens in the nursery. Children feel safe because they know their key worker has a good understanding of their needs and is always close at hand.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Most are helpful and kind to each other. They appreciate the world in which they live because they walk in the locality and plant and watch flowers grow. The sensory tree encourages children to pause during a hectic day and appreciate calm and stillness. They learn about the wider world and celebrate other cultures and festivals.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good overall and outstanding in the teaching of personal and social skills. The orderly atmosphere and very effective daily organisation means children grow in

confidence because they are comfortable with the daily routines. Staff are quick to spot when children need help or when to stand back and let them learn for themselves. Fun is at the heart of all activities. Parents are warned not to send their children to school in their best clothes. This is essential because staff appreciate the need for first-hand experiences. It is daily practice for children and staff to get messy as they experiment with clay and a variety of coloured pasta and bubbly liquids. There is a good balance between activities led by an adult and those initiated by the children. Activities led by an adult are always interesting but occasionally repetition, for example of a rhyme, leads to some children being eager to move on. Planning is detailed and identifies how work is to be matched to the different abilities. This is usually accurate because staff direct questions and discussions to children at the correct level of understanding. Only in writing was it seen that more able children could be further challenged to attempt more of their own writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because it is firmly based on an understanding of the needs of young children. Indoor and outdoor activities are wide ranging and stimulating, encouraging children to grow in confidence to follow their interests. Books are often the focus of activities. This worked very well during the inspection when the story *What's Under the Bed?* led to imaginative play that included coal mining, an underground train station and the use of the mini-beast collection.

Information and communication technology is used well and children often opt to use the computers or the interactive white board which, during the inspection, was showing a magical clip of a snail moving. As well as being an integrated part of daily life personal and social development has a special weekly slot to focus on a specific activity. The use of the puppets called Henry and Eric very imaginatively encourage children to learn about keeping healthy and safe. They start to understand how it feels if they are hurt or upset and how they can be kind and help each other. Many children start school with limited knowledge beyond the locality and visits and visitors are used to excellent effect to add richness and broaden children's horizons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is good and is stronger than the academic guidance given to pupils. Excellent attention is given to pupils' well-being and the school fully exploits the expertise available as part of the Children's Centre. The seamless integration with the Children's Centre enables children to move freely between units. This is most beneficial and enables them to move happily into the nursery. The school has outstanding links with external agents who support families and children. Health and safety procedures are in place. The school checks carefully on the background and suitability of all adults working with children. A parent accurately summed up this level of care as enabling her child to 'blossom.'

Systems to monitor children's progress are good. The school has individual learning journals and plans effectively for children's individual needs. The school now has useful information about individual progress, but is not making best use of this to track progress compared to what is expected of this age range through the year. The school is involving children more in their own learning by weekly sessions which review photographs with children, parents and carers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher provides exceptional leadership and all are unanimous in their respect of her. Supported by all, she has successfully created a thriving family learning centre where children are happy and flourish.

Self-evaluation is reflective and the school has an accurate view of its overall effectiveness. Monitoring of teaching is good and identifies areas for staff to improve. It has mainly been conducted by the headteacher although this role is now being extended to involve all staff and paired observations have already taken place. The school has a good informal picture of achievement in the school, but does not support this by making full use of assessment information to monitor performance and to set priorities for improvement. Management of the needs of the pupils with learning difficulties and or/disabilities and those learning through English as an additional language is effective and benefits from detailed assessments and excellent links with external agents to guide support.

Governance is good. Governors played a major role in the school's development as a Children's Centre. This involved many additional decisions especially dealing with finances which are effectively managed. To some extent this has taken them away from their involvement in the day-to-day activities and their involvement in deciding the school's priorities.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	2
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	3
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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	2

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?	2

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?	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	2
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

18 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Longshaw Nursery School, Blackburn, BB2 3NF

Thank you for having me in your nursery. I enjoyed my visit very much and it gave me great pleasure to watch you enjoying some of the exciting things you do inside and outside. You are lucky to attend such a wonderful nursery. I was impressed by your good behaviour and kindness to each other. You follow the nursery rules and listen carefully to the adults who help you. It was lovely to see you being so energetic in your wonderful outdoor playing area and I know you enjoy the fresh air and keeping fit.

I think your teachers are good and provide you with an amazing variety of activities that keep you very busy. I think you work hard and enjoy writing your name but some children could try to write a little more. The adults who look after you look carefully at how well you are doing and are going to check that you are all learning as well as you can. You can help by always doing your best and trying hard.

I hope you all continue to enjoy nursery and I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J E Platt

Lead Inspector