

Hillside Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119093
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	291315
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Karen Ling

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	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Dorothy Atkinson
Headteacher	Mrs Lyn Dawber
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2001
School address	Cedar Avenue Haslingden Rossendale Lancashire BB4 5NH
Telephone number	01706 214162
Fax number	01706 214162

Age group	3–4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average sized nursery school situated on a small housing estate in the Longshoot area of Haslingden. The school is in an area with high levels of social and economic disadvantage. It serves a wide geographical area. Approximately 70% of children come from the immediate area. Most children are of White British heritage. Approximately 15% of children are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language (EAL). A small proportion of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). Children attend morning or afternoon sessions. Some take advantage of the full day care provision that operates within the school. This facility is subject to a separate inspection by Ofsted.

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 school with outstanding features where every child matters. The excited chatter, giggles and smiles show just how much children enjoy coming to this nursery school. A strength of the school is the excellent leadership of the headteacher, which, together with the whole staff's commitment to their work, provides a challenging and most enjoyable start to learning. Staff work exceptionally well as a team. As a result, sessions run smoothly and like clockwork without detracting from the sense of ease at which children move around. Many parents gave their views of the school and every response was positive. Most commented on the high levels of support the headteacher and staff have provided for their child. The very good relationships between staff and children contribute significantly to the children's outstanding personal development and to the school's welcoming feel. The following comment from a parent reflects the feelings of many: 'The staff are an inspiration to the children, always looking for ways to improve and provide better care, fun and education.'

Children enter the school with skills and knowledge that are very wide ranging but average overall. A few children have difficulties learning for a range of reasons. Some have little experience of life beyond their immediate surroundings and communication skills are limited. However, cohorts vary each year. The 2006 cohort, for example, had an unusually high number of children recognised as being gifted and talented. Planned activities met their needs well and achievement was particularly good in communication, language and literacy. All children achieve well and make good progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of learning during their time at nursery. The progress that children with LDD make is outstanding. By the end of nursery, the skills and knowledge attained by the vast majority of children are in line with, or exceed those expected for children of their age. This is a direct result of good and occasionally outstanding teaching, and the varied and stimulating curriculum. Children show high levels of enthusiasm because activities reflect their interests. However, the school has correctly identified that there is scope for developing aspects of communication language and literacy so that children's awareness of rhyme, rhythm, letters and sounds and an interest in writing, particularly for boys, is increased.

The school has worked well to address the issues raised at the last inspection. The good organisation of resources along with expectations that children contribute to tasks, such as tidying away, ensure that children develop good levels of independence during their time at nursery. The continuous provision of activities ensures that children now have regular access to the computer and confidently manage to complete activities and show developing skills; for example, as they control the mouse and follow instructions. Some staff have a good grasp of information and communication technology (ICT) and use resources with some expertise to support children's learning. However, ICT resources are not yet used to full effect by all staff. Staff carefully monitor children's progress through regular observations and assessments. They use this information well to inform next steps in learning. The staff and governors are continually looking at ways to improve provision and the school has good capacity to move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan regular systematic and differentiated opportunities for children to develop their knowledge and awareness of rhyme and rhythm and make links between sounds and letters.
- Promote boys' interest in writing by making more purposeful links to things which capture their imagination.

- Increase the ICT knowledge and skills of all staff, so that resources are used more creatively to further enhance children's learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children join the nursery with a wide range of abilities. Though the ability of many is average, some have difficulties learning, while others are very capable. By the end of the Nursery Year, most children's attainment is in line with or exceeds that expected for their age. This is because the nursery is very successful at settling children and raising their confidence and self-esteem. This enables them to succeed and parents are very positive about the difference the nursery makes to their overall development. The nursery is very inclusive and staff have high expectations of what children can achieve. As a result, children, including those with EAL, make good progress. Those with LDD make excellent progress. However, there is scope to develop aspects of communication language and literacy so that children's awareness of rhyme, rhythm, letters and sounds and an interest in writing, particularly for boys, is increased.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Children love coming to school and benefit greatly from the warm and very caring relationships adults provide. Consequently, their confidence, independence and social skills are promoted exceptionally well. Children are very good at making choices and persevere with activities. Their involvement in their own learning is excellent and allows them to really enjoy activities especially when they are praised and given 'smiley certificates' for their achievement. Behaviour is excellent for much of the time because staff set consistently high expectations, which help children to learn the boundaries and know right from wrong. While many children are still focused on their own needs, staff skilfully encourage an awareness of each other's needs. They learn about aspects of other cultures and act out ideas; for example, as they dress up and play with a wide range of role play equipment. The school successfully encourages a healthy lifestyle; for example, through regular energetic play. Children feel safe at school and are aware of how to stay safe in and around the school. For example, they know it is too dangerous to play on the climbing frame when it is wet. Attendance is satisfactory overall for most children. However, the extended holidays taken by a small number of families has a negative impact on attendance figures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and occasionally outstanding. Children gain confidence from the adults who work with them and enjoy the stimulating teaching. Most staff skilfully ask questions, which make children think and encourage responses. Staff provide a wonderful range of practical activities, indoors and outdoors and achieve a good balance between those planned by themselves and those initiated by children. Areas are organised to ensure that children have easy access to resources. Classroom displays are vibrant and reflect what children are currently learning about. During the inspection, the topic was 'The Sea'. Children's knowledge of sea creatures and varieties of fish was very impressive. Displays, songs, the role play pirate

ship and stories about the sea reflect staff's effort to make activities meaningful. As a consequence of the wonderful environment, children engage well as they explore, experiment and make decisions. In most instances, children are well challenged.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and has a significant impact on children's learning and the progress they make. Staff work exceptionally hard to make it challenging and fun. This promotes positive attitudes and an excitement for learning. All areas of learning are covered well over time. Sessions cater for the full range of children's needs. Staff work very effectively to enrich children's learning through a wide range of visits and visitors. Much is done to enhance language development and extend vocabulary. Mathematical development is promoted well through planned activities and every day routines such as snack time, where children work out how many cups are needed. This ensures that children develop essential skills that equip them well for later life. ICT is being used more effectively than at the last inspection. Children confidently operate the simple computer programmes and have used the digital camera to take photographs of each other. However, ICT resources are not yet used to full effect by staff or children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support of children are outstanding and underpin everything that the school is seeking to achieve. Relationships between adults and children are very good. The school has established strong relationships with an extensive range of agencies, including Health and Social Services, which support arrangements for safeguarding children and their transfer on to primary school. Children with LDD receive a high level of effective support, which ensures that they make excellent progress. Teaching provision for bilingual children successfully supports them to take a full part in activities and promotes their progress well. The school is currently working on ways to further improve this support; for example, by using children's first language more to reinforce learning. Observations and assessments of every child are carried out regularly and are used well to check and track the progress individuals and groups of children make in their personal and academic development.

Staff work hard to involve parents in their child's learning. For example, some parents attend courses organised by the school, which help develop their confidence and knowledge in supporting their child's learning. Staff have good informal relationships with parents and carers, which contribute well to children's well-being.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides excellent leadership for the school. Her influence pervades every aspect of the school's life and work. With the contributions of successive staff, governors and parents she has created a wonderful learning environment in which children flourish. Good relationships and high expectations are evident throughout the school. Monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum by senior managers is good. School improvement planning is effective and actions are well targeted because they are based on a good understanding of the school's performance. For example, funds are being

sought to continue developing and improving the outdoor learning area. Governors are supportive in their role and provide appropriate challenge to the headteacher. They are committed to inclusion; provision for children with LDD is excellent. The budget is well managed and the school provides good value for money. This school is flourishing because the headteacher, along with her staff, is dedicated to giving children the best start in their school life.

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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	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	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	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	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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
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	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

9 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Hillside Nursery School, Haslingden, BB4 5NH

Do you remember when I visited your school a few days ago? There was so much rain but I'm glad you still managed to get outside to play. I think you have a wonderful school and I could see how much you all enjoy yourselves each day. The teachers and adults who look after you care about you very much and make sure you have lots of exciting things to do each day. During your time at nursery school you learn so many new things. Your teachers make learning fun and that makes you smile and laugh a lot. Mind you, I heard a lot of shouts too when you saw the shark in the sea!

Hillside Nursery is a good school and some things are excellent! Mrs Dawber, your teachers and the governors are always looking at ways to make your school even better. They are going to:

- plan more activities and games, which help you to learn about sounds and letters and rhyme and rhythm in spoken words
- think of other interesting ideas that will capture the interest of the boys in writing
- plan more ways of using the ICT resources.

I hope you like the pattern I put at the top of your letter from clipart. It reminded me of your 'Sea' topic. I wish you all a very happy time when you move to your new school in September. Remember always try to do your best, just as you have done at nursery school. Well done everyone!

Best wishes

Karen Ling

Lead Inspector