



Highfield Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124525
Local Authority SUFFOLK
Inspection number 293022
Inspection dates 7–8 March 2007
Reporting inspector Cheryl Thompson

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Chesterfield Drive
School category	Community		Ipswich
Age range of pupils	3–4		Suffolk IP1 6DW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01473742534
Number on roll (school)	100	Fax number	01473742534
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Brian Lucas
		Headteacher	Mrs Sheri Wilks
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2001		

Age group 3–4	Inspection dates 7–8 March 2007	Inspection number 293022
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves the local community and has a newly-opened Sure Start Children's Centre attached. Children attend school part-time either in the morning or afternoon. Almost all children are from White British backgrounds with just small numbers of minority ethnic pupils and children at a very early stage of learning English. There is an average number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but a much higher than usual number of children with significant levels of learning difficulties/disabilities. Attainment on entry is very wide ranging but, on balance, typical for the age group. The school is federated with nearby Castle Hill Infant school. This federation means that the schools have the same headteacher and staff expertise and resources can be shared.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Highfield is an outstanding nursery school. Children achieve well and attain standards that are above those typical for their age. Parents and children rightly hold the school in high esteem. Through its astute self-evaluation, the school has an excellent understanding of its strengths and areas to improve. The school's over-modest judgement of itself as 'good' reflects its lack of complacency and pursuit of excellence. The school provides excellent value for money and has an outstanding capacity to improve.

Central to the school's success are the outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher has managed changes very sensitively and ensured the recent appointment of a curriculum leader whose innovative and outstanding practice has helped the school develop even further. Together they share the knowledge and passionate vision for high quality nursery provision. They lead a talented team of practitioners who provide an outstanding curriculum of exciting learning opportunities and excellent teaching. Consequently, children thoroughly enjoy school, are exceptionally keen to learn and make good progress. As one parent wrote, 'My son has a fabulous time at Highfield, he has come on leaps and bounds.' Practitioners keep detailed records of children's progress. Currently, these records are not always being used to ensure that the older and the more able children are challenged to make even better progress.

Where children make impressive progress is in their personal development. By the time they leave the school, their personal development is outstanding. They have a very strong sense of belonging to the nursery community and are genuinely kind and considerate to one another. Small groups work exceptionally well together for their age when they tidy away equipment or run their 'garden centre'. These qualities, together with the good progress made in learning basic skills to help them read and write, prepare children exceptionally well for their future education. They know how to keep themselves and others safe, for example, when they ride their bikes. They show a clear understanding of basic hygiene when they wash their hands ready for their healthy choice of snacks.

The care, guidance and support at Highfield is outstanding. Children feel very safe and secure and are totally confident that any adult will help them. Practitioners are adept at managing the difficult balance of encouraging adventurous activities with ensuring safety. For example, the older children visit a nearby wood to explore 'Forest Trails' and, at school, children build dens in the undergrowth. Parents are valued as fundamental partners in their child's education and are kept very well informed as to their child's progress and how they can help at home. As a parent wrote, 'The school always listens to my views and gives me advice.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Make more precise use of assessment to extend even further both the older and more able children

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In response to the high quality provision, children achieve well in relation to their starting points and stage of development. By the time they leave the nursery, standards are above those typical for the age group but exceptionally high in personal development. Children with significant levels of learning difficulty and/or disability achieve exceptionally well. This achievement is because of excellent relationships with parents and outside agencies which inform the individual support provided in the nursery.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and well-being are excellent. Attendance is good because children love coming to nursery. As one parent said, 'They bloom here'. Children involve themselves enthusiastically with all the exciting activities on offer and persevere for very good lengths of time. For example, booking cars into the 'garage' for repairs and carrying these out together. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Behaviour is excellent. They demonstrate first class social and negotiating skills, for example, when sharing equipment and taking turns to race their toy cars. Children who are at the early stages of learning English are fully involved in activities and supported by their friends to make sure that they understand new words. Practitioners explain, demonstrate and reinforce 'rules' for using tools and the large apparatus. Consequently, children know how to keep themselves safe and demonstrate this when they use equipment very sensibly. Children become confident with making choices because practitioners work alongside them to encourage and support them to do so.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Excellent teaching by the very experienced and knowledgeable team of practitioners underpins children's good progress. Many practitioners have extra qualifications in such areas as speech and language and enter into research, for example, into the identification and development of gifted and talented children. Their expertise is shared with colleagues and used in daily planning and supporting individuals. Learning is consistently good. Teaching stimulates and builds on children's curiosity. Activities are carefully planned to build on what children know and need to learn next. They become engrossed in these activities with their learning guided and extended by knowledgeable practitioners. Just a few older and more able children could do even better if the good assessments were used to provide more challenging work. Practitioners know parents and carers well and, clearly, parents feel very welcome in

the nursery. A key strength is the 'meet and greet' time at the beginning of sessions where parents and practitioners can share information.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and meets children's needs exceptionally well. It develops their early knowledge, understanding and skills in ways which provide an excellent basis for their future education. The carefully planned outside environment is fully utilised to promote all areas of learning through first hand experiences and is particularly effective in nurturing children's fitness and sense of adventure. The 'Forest Trail' initiative is a very beneficial experience, valued by parents and loved by children. Highfield children have the opportunity to build a den in a wood and sit in it to drink hot chocolate!

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Central to the outstanding care, guidance and support is the strong relationship with parents as partners in their child's education. Starting and leaving nursery school is made easy. Home visits, visits to the nursery and discussions with practitioners give children a smooth start to school. Visits to receiving schools and visits from their future teachers prepare them well for their Reception classes. Children feel safe and secure in the nursery and it is clear that parents have every confidence that their child is looked after well. Parents speak highly of all the staff. The school's safeguarding procedures meet government requirements. Child protection procedures are robust and known by all staff. Excellent links with outside agencies help the school support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their parents very effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's passionate vision for a happy school and high quality learning experiences within a centre of excellence is shared by the curriculum leader and all staff. The headteacher took over a 'good' school with an experienced team of practitioners. In a relatively short time, through astute evaluation of the school's work, changes for the better have been managed sensitively and the strong team spirit maintained. Practitioners are positively encouraged to develop their skills. The appointment of an outstanding curriculum leader has complemented the staff's expertise. The school has gone from strength to strength. Governors are very proud and supportive of the school and provide good governance. The Children's Centre is a new dimension to the school which is already contributing further to the all-round care and education of children and their families.

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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?	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?	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	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

9 March 2007

Dear Children

Highfield Nursery School, Chesterfield Drive, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 6DW

Thank you for welcoming me to your school, I really enjoyed being with you and seeing all the interesting things you do. I could see that you loved being in school and that you know all the teachers take great care of you. Your parents and carers think your school is great too.

You go to an outstanding school and this is because Mrs Wilks and all the teachers make sure you have lots of exciting things to do and you get excellent teaching. Your key persons keep very good notes about how you are getting on and share them with your families.

I have asked Mrs Wilks to do something to make your school even better. I have asked her to make sure that some of the older children sometimes have work that will make them think hard.

I hope you continue to love coming to school and that your seeds soon start to grow and the tadpoles grow all their legs.

All good wishes

Cheryl Thompson

Lead inspector