



West Exe Children's Centre Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134674
Local Authority Devon
Inspection number 294146
Inspection date 10 October 2006
Reporting inspector Margaret Hulme

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Cowick Street
School category	Community		Exeter
Age range of pupils	3-4		EX4 1HL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01392 279361
Number on roll (school)	73	Fax number	01392 269555
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rod Ruffles
		Headteacher	Brian Lee
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group 3-4	Inspection date 10 October 2006	Inspection number 294146
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This new nursery school opened in January 2006 as a result of local authority reorganisation. It was formed from the amalgamation of a family centre nursery and a nursery class in a first school and is an integral part of a Children's Centre. The school works in partnership with a wide range of services at the Children's Centre. It is situated in an area of some social disadvantage. All children attend part-time. The majority are White British, with a few representing other ethnic groups. No children speak English as an additional language. There is a high proportion of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. The Children's Centre head who is also the headteacher of the nursery school, as been absent for a lengthy time and the nursery is currently led by an acting headteacher on a part-time basis.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This new school is satisfactory, with some good features. The successful amalgamation of two types of nursery provision is testimony to its capacity to improve further. One parent summed it up: 'This is an amazing nursery which has a happy exciting feel the minute you walk in. The staff are approachable, friendly, supportive and non-judgemental. They appreciate each child as an individual and work hard to make sure the children have a successful learning experience.' The school is a well-established part of the Children's Centre. Children's achievement is satisfactory overall as they work towards the standards expected. The caring, supportive atmosphere provides a firm foundation for children's personal development, which is sound and improving. Children enjoy school and are kept safe. Behaviour is satisfactory but some children lose interest easily. The good quality activities in an excellent outdoor area promote healthy lifestyles. Relationships between children and adults are reflected in the trust they have in all staff. Children are secure and happy. All adults take part in teaching, which is satisfactory overall. Bringing together the expertise of staff from two types of nursery provision is not yet complete and, as a result, some inconsistencies in practice still remain. Some activities do not provide sufficient challenge and a few children, particularly boys, sometimes lose interest and do not achieve as well as they might. Considerable information is gathered that results in good records of children's progress. This information is not always used as well as it might be to enable every child's needs to be met. The acting headteacher provides firm direction for the school's work. The school has a good view of what it does well and how it might be improved. However, part-time leadership makes it difficult to give adequate time to guiding and supporting staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Secure the leadership as soon as is reasonably practical to ensure that all staff have the guidance and support needed to make the necessary improvements.
- Help teachers make better use of the information about progress to improve their lesson planning and thus ensure that all children's needs are met and inconsistency is eradicated.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children's overall achievement is satisfactory, given their starting points and capabilities. When children start nursery many have weaker communication and social skills than expected for their age but after nine months in school, the standards are broadly in line with expectations, although listening skills are not as well developed. All groups of children make at least satisfactory progress and the more able make good progress. The school has planned more activities that will challenge boys and improve their attitude to learning. Parents leave staff in no doubt about their satisfaction with their children's progress. A parent writing on a questionnaire said, 'Since my son has been

at nursery he has come on leaps and bounds.' During the inspection many parents were positive about how individual needs are met and how skilled teaching, particularly from the acting headteacher, helps their children make gains in knowledge and skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory and has some good features. The nursery has taken steps to improve children's behaviour, which is mainly satisfactory. Adults help children understand the importance of listening and what it means to agree or disagree with another person's idea. One parent wrote, 'I have been very pleased with the way in which my son's more challenging behaviour has been managed and his abilities nurtured'. However, improving concentration and listening remain priorities, particularly for boys whose lack of skills in these areas sometimes results in them not achieving as well as they might. A good programme of physical activities allows children to experiment and try out their skills without staff standing over them cautiously. Healthy eating is evident at snack time. The orderly and harmonious community means that bullying is rare. Children make a satisfactory contribution to the school community as they help to tidy up. They are developing the skills important for future life. Children's enjoyment in their learning results in good attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. All teachers and learning support assistants have a role in teaching and are involved in tracking progress. However, limited time to amalgamate the expertise of staff from two separate establishments has resulted in some inconsistencies in the way in which assessment is used. There are good records of children's progress but sometimes they are not used well enough. Plans are afoot to ensure that all teachers' planning is based on observations so that every child's needs are met. Parents talked at length of their confidence in the staff to provide a range of activities that hold children's interest and make them want to come each day. Many of the purposeful play and practical activities keep most children interested, but a few switch off if what they are asked to do is not appropriate to their level of understanding. Teachers do not always give enough attention to providing activities that take account of what children already know and can do. This prevents progress being better than satisfactory. A strong feature of the teaching is the warm, caring relationships that motivate children to try harder.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good because planning and learning are based on the children's ideas and interests. There is a good balance between teacher-directed tasks and those selected by the children. Adequate attention is given to the development of early reading, writing and number skills. The adults are becoming very aware that well-planned activities are the key to children learning with enjoyment and challenge. A significant feature is the exceptional outdoor area, which is a real bonus in enabling children to experience a good programme of activities in a large space. There is an increasing focus on supporting children's learning through well-planned first-hand experiences. However, the range of learning opportunities still requires some adaptation to take account of children's differing needs. Parents are involved well in supporting their children's learning. They recently took part in a typical nursery session exploring the kind of activities that their children experienced. Several commented that this extended their understanding of how children learn and gave them confidence to try play at home.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The overall care, guidance and support for children are good. Teachers' knowledge of children is good because the information they gather is supplemented by parents and carers, who value the home visits prior to their children starting school. Daily contact with parents allows staff to share their children's achievements. This encourages parents to comment on their children's interests and successes at home and school. Children's trusting relationships with adults make them confident to seek advice and support. Children who need extra help to adapt to nursery routines are identified early and supported well. With greater security, these children gain trust in the staff and a willingness to make efforts in overcoming difficulties. The good liaison with other services at the Children's Centre keeps nursery staff up to date on a range of issues related to children's care and welfare. This ensures that appropriate support and guidance can be given to children and families where needed. The records of progress are effective because pieces of children's work and adult comments make clear how well each child is doing. Although the procedures for gathering evidence are effective, its use is only now having a positive effect on achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Overall, the leadership and management are satisfactory but there are some good features. During a difficult period of reorganisation, the acting headteacher and a new governing body have met the challenge of amalgamating two settings successfully into a new nursery school within a Children's Centre. Most staff work part-time and this has limited the time for discussion and debate, but the acting headteacher has

used his knowledge and experience effectively to establish a common sense of purpose. He provides strong and caring leadership and is the driving force in seeking constant improvement. He knows what needs doing, takes action and is developing processes and practice further across the nursery. An experienced chair of governors leads a supportive team, but many governors are new and still acquiring the skills needed to make more than a satisfactory contribution to promoting high quality care and education. The main statutory requirements are in place, but after just seven months it is not surprising that others are still in draft form; governors are working hard to complete this task. The school's view of its strengths and weaknesses is mainly accurate and provides a clear view of the further development required. It is constantly reviewed and refined and is effective in moving the school forward. For example, following discussion with staff the acting headteacher introduced ways of observing teaching and learning. This extended teachers' understanding of how effective practice could improve children's learning and give them more consistent experiences. Despite the effective leadership and management provided by the acting headteacher, challenges remain. Staff are committed to ensuring the success of the new nursery school but lack elements of guidance and support to help this be achieved as quickly as it might. Work planned but not yet tackled includes ways of improving teaching so more of it is good, such as ensuring that assessment is so well embedded that it affects the children's learning in all areas of development. Developing leadership across the nursery is just beginning.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

I had such a lovely visit to your nursery. Thank you for helping me and letting me join in your play. The nursery is such a happy place and all the adults look after you well. I saw that you enjoy school. You have some good activities that are fun and I loved the outdoor area with so many exciting things to do. You come as often as you can and your mums and dads are learning how to help you in the nursery and give you interesting things to do at home. Although your teachers give you some exciting things to do, some of these need to be more interesting. All the work to move into the nursery gave the adults lots of extra things to do and they have got a bit behind with a few of the management jobs that they do when you go home. They are catching up now and you have such a lovely new building to work and play in.