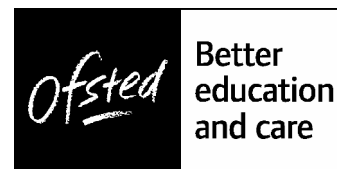


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26 January 2007

Miss B Wilkin  
Headteacher  
Horden Nursery School  
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SR8 4TB

Dear Miss Wilkin

Ofsted survey inspection programme: Curriculum Innovation

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 January 2007 to look at your school's curriculum and how it contributes to standards and achievement.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters are published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff, talking to children, scrutiny of relevant documentation, and observing the school and children as they arrived and during their activities.

Your school is an exemplar of terrific early years practice. The overall effectiveness of the curriculum was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

- Young children, now from two years of age, make a flying start to their education in your school. From low starting points, they make rapid progress in each of the areas assessed and, on leaving, are very well placed to succeed in reception classes.
- You have well organised and detailed assessment systems but they are not over-bureaucratic. These assessments link well with the daily activity plans made by staff, so that all children's needs are met effectively.
- The system for baseline and initial assessment works very well and should provide helpful evidence about the difference an early start, at age two, in the nursery can make.

## Quality of the curriculum

- You and the staff understand the particular needs of children in the Horden community and have high expectations of each one in your care. The progression of skills, such as perseverance and independence, are identified and structured brilliantly in the staff guidance folder which serves as another excellent example of your knowledge of individual children. Exciting themes and appropriate learning objectives for all planned activities result in a rich and relevant curriculum. Staff enjoy the variety of work they do in the different areas of the nursery. The children love it too!
- Well-known and relevant routines mean that all children are actively involved in their learning as soon as they arrive. They make many choices and often design their own activities. Exciting resources and equipment are attractively displayed and easily available to the children. This strongly encourages motivation, imagination and enjoyment. Planning systems ensure that no child misses any vital learning. The very best is made of the school's rather small temporary building and outside area.
- Interaction between staff and pupils is very positive. Children learn important words and concepts through the adults' skilled repetition of key vocabulary.
- Visits to places in the locality are purposeful and add to the children's rich experience of learning. It was lovely to see the children who had been to the building site using shovels, wooden bricks and sand as mortar, just like the real builders.

## Leadership and management of the curriculum

- Working closely with your deputy and others, you provide impressive and energetic direction to the work of the school. All management systems are very efficient. Finances are managed and targeted well to ensure the quality of provision.
- Your success is shown in many ways, including the outstanding curriculum, the progress made by children and the recent establishment of the Horden Children's Centre, on another site, which some of your pupils attend. This centre is innovatively structured to meet the community's needs, with a strong educational influence from your school. You are also helpfully involved in networks with other schools and give valuable expert advice to other providers.
- You and your staff have a deep understanding of the early years curriculum. High quality training and development opportunities are available to staff which lead to a strong professional dialogue and the excellent provision for children. Staff increasingly understand the need to keep evaluating and developing their practice to meet changing circumstances.
- The school has many approaches to engaging parents and forging positive relationships, recognising this is a crucial time for parents to become

engaged. Many parents have become more involved with their children's education, though some have not. The lack of a parents' room, due to shortage of space, is a significant limitation.

### Inclusion

- You lead a very inclusive school. The needs of all children, including some with significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are met in very caring and effective ways.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- explore further ways of engaging all parents in understanding the curriculum, and contributing more to their children's education
- consider developing a more clearly explicit whole school vision of what a high quality nursery education, and curriculum, is for your community
- ensure the curriculum for, and progress of, nursery school pupils in the children's centre is specifically evaluated.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the curriculum in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton  
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools