

Highfield Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103125
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308227
Inspection date	12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Joyce Cox

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	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Jones
Headteacher	Catherine McManus
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2001
School address	Highfield Road Birmingham B8 3QU
Telephone number	01213 6754617
Fax number	01213 6751898

Age group	3-4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This nursery is now part of a children's centre, which was established in January 2006. The children's centre provides an extensive range of integrated services and day care facilities for families and children as well as full and part time nursery provision for children aged three and four. Many of the children who attend the nursery come from families that face considerably challenging social and economic circumstances. Children's attainment when they start in the nursery is well below the expected levels and particularly low in their communication, personal and social skills. An above average number of children have learning difficulties. All of the children are from minority ethnic backgrounds and virtually all are at an early stage of learning English. They are supported in their preferred languages, which include Mirpuri, Bengali and Pushto. All the children are of Muslim faith. A new headteacher joined the senior leadership team this term.

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. At the core of its work is a total commitment to children's welfare and well-being. Links with families, the local community and professional agencies are excellent, and the nursery is a very positive, respected and valued resource in the Saltley area. Parents appreciate and enjoy the high quality facilities on offer. One parent, summing up the views of many, wrote, 'Our nursery is the very best because children do well, they learn to speak English and also learn how to behave well thanks to the lovely headteacher and the excellent staff.' Children's behaviour is excellent. Children love coming to the nursery and work and play together harmoniously and happily. They become increasingly independent, interested and motivated in their learning. This is because resources are attractive and accessible, activities are interesting and staff interact so skillfully to extend children's confidence and self-esteem. Children's achievement is good and many attain close to the expected levels on entry to their Reception classes because learning activities are matched well to their needs. The nursery's special emphasis on personal development ensures children make rapid gains in their personal and social skills and reach high standards in this aspect of their development. Children work and play extremely safely together. They successfully learn to use tools, such as scissors, thoughtfully and carefully. They learn how to live healthily by eating fruit and growing vegetables and enjoying active outdoor play. Children contribute well to their nursery community by helping to tidy up. Good progress in learning and excellent relationships, a diverse, engaging curriculum and effective teaching ensure all children are well prepared for later life and learning.

Staff are very welcoming, skilled and highly committed and listen carefully to what local families want, thereby giving them a real say in the nursery's development. These qualities are recognised and much appreciated by parents who love the numerous classes and activities provided for them by the nursery. Bilingual teachers and support staff work side by side and take equal responsibility for developing and monitoring the outstanding curriculum. Different aspects of learning are linked together well, and staff take every opportunity to develop language and mathematical skills and so promote children's academic achievement to the full. Excellent provision for children with English as an additional language, coupled with talented bilingual staff, enables children to make good progress in learning English and to achieve well. More able children are identified and their talents encouraged and developed so that they attain above the expected levels when they leave.

Thorough assessment, based on direct observation of children's progress and achievements, makes sure that activities are planned and varied to match children's needs. Senior leaders agree that the next step is to make it easier to track children's progress during their time at nursery. The new headteacher has made an excellent start and, together with the highly competent senior leadership team, has skilfully built on, and improved, the already good practice. Governors have conscientiously embraced their extended responsibilities. They keep themselves well informed and have a good understanding of how nursery aged children learn and develop. There has been excellent progress since the last inspection. Given the high level of staff commitment, children's good achievement, and the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher and senior leaders, the capacity for further improvement is excellent.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

As the school only has children aged 3 and 4 years, there is no requirement to complete this section. The previous section covers, in full, the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the way children's progress is tracked in all the areas of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

As a result of the very good relationships, imaginative activities, access to a wide range of attractive resources, and effective teaching, all the children make good progress in their learning and excellent progress in developing their personal and social skills. Many children attain close to the expected levels on entry to their Reception classes. No significant differences in the achievement of different groups of children are apparent. Children who have learning difficulties are supported and cared for well and their achievement is good. Children who have English as an additional language make particularly good progress in their communication skills because of the very skilful way staff use community languages. The children's achievement is enhanced significantly by the talented bilingual staff who speak Mirpuri, Punjabi, Bengali and Pushto.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children are very well behaved and learn to be increasingly independent, confident and interested in their work and play. Their smiles and laughter indicate just how much they enjoy their time at nursery. They are considerate and kind to each other, share resources well, and quickly learn to take turns. Children contribute well to the nursery by helping to tidy up and look after the resources. They work and play extremely safely together, and are developing a good understanding of healthy lifestyles through eating fruit and playing energetically indoors and outdoors. Children like the movement and imagination room, which has a very good selection of physical play activities for children to choose from. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They take part in a diverse range of activities to learn about different cultures and faiths, all of which are respected and valued. A highly successful carnival brought together Eid, Diwali and Black African celebrations and was thoroughly enjoyed by the nursery children and families and the local community. Although there are a number of absences due to extended holidays and illness, children's prompt arrival at sessions indicates their eagerness to attend.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Children learn well because of the good quality of teaching and good use of a wide range of attractive resources. Staff know the children well, understand how children develop, and are very familiar with the Foundation Stage curriculum. Planning covers all the areas of learning, and activities are adapted carefully to suit children's varying interests and needs. Relationships are excellent and children respond well to praise and staff's high expectations. They are

interested, motivated and keen. There are many good opportunities for children to work on their own, with their friends, and with adults. All these factors successfully contribute to good progress and outstanding personal development. The one area requiring improvement is to make sure all staff are aware of the next steps in children's learning through a clear tracking system. Staff view parents as co-educators and encourage them to be fully involved in their children's learning at all times. Consequently, parents benefit from numerous opportunities to learn alongside their children. They hold the staff in very high regard and really appreciate the bilingual support. One parent writes, 'It has been very useful having a Bengali speaking teacher who has helped me and my child in understanding day to day routines.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

One of the curriculum's excellent features is that it is skilfully planned to fully reflect the cultural heritage of the children and also other minority ethnic groups who are not represented in the nursery. Priority is given to promoting children's speaking and listening skills, language enrichment and extending the children's life experiences outside the community. Staff reported how successful a recent carnival had been and how well children and families from differing cultural and religious traditions had participated and contributed. These events, along with visits out with parents, such as a recent one to a farm, broaden children's horizons and help parents extend children's learning at home. Innovative projects, such as an artist in residence, a gardening project, and many courses for families broaden the curriculum, widen community engagement and encapsulate the nursery's vision and core purpose.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There is a long tradition of high quality care and support at Highfield. The staff are totally dedicated to the welfare of their children and families. The network of connections with a vast range of agencies and services and the effectiveness of their work have grown to such an extent that pastoral care for children and community can only be described as outstanding. As a result, children are happy and secure, and this is a key contributory factor to their good progress. The nursery is a haven of tranquillity, and parents are delighted to come in and share in this experience. 'All the staff make me and my child feel extremely welcome and at ease' is a typical comment. The quantity and quality of the advice and guidance available from staff and specialists make a significant difference to the learning and the lives of the children and their families and is a key factor in ensuring children's excellent personal development

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The excellent leadership and management provided by the senior leaders is a key factor in the nursery's success. The new headteacher, working closely with senior leaders, has rapidly formed a very accurate evaluation of the nursery's strengths and areas for development and a high calibre development plan. This term they have developed an effective way to record children's achievement and accept that the next step is to devise an easy way to track children's progress to show how much each child has achieved in each of the areas of learning. They have also succeeded in involving all staff much more in ways to improve the nursery. Governors are supportive and are developing their role in evaluating the school's work well. Senior leaders

run excellent courses for parents on a variety of subjects, such as the importance and value of learning through play. These courses provide parents with the necessary skills and resources to support their children's learning effectively. Central to the nursery's aims, and one of its many successes, is the outstanding way in which the nursery has successfully established a community where the diversity of children's backgrounds is appreciated and valued and where similar life opportunities are available to all.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

13 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Highfield Nursery School, Birmingham B8 3QU

We enjoyed our visit to your nursery very much. We really liked watching some of the exciting things you do and meeting some of your mums and dads and your younger brothers and sisters. We think that you go to an excellent nursery.

There are lots of great things about your nursery.

- You are good at working hard, helping each other and listening to your teachers, and you do well in all your activities.
- The staff care about you very much, they are good teachers and make learning interesting and fun.
- The staff leaders are very clever at running the nursery and make sure you all have a good time and do well.
- Anybody who needs extra help with learning English, or with work, is always given it.
- You love learning new things and are very good at sharing, taking turns, and being kind to each other.
- Your nursery does lots of great things for your mums and dads to enjoy.

The headteacher and staff have many good ideas to make the nursery even better. We agree with their ideas and also think it would be good if they could find a way to write down all the great things you learn from when you start to when you finish at the nursery.

It was good to see that you are all so happy and doing well and that your mums and dads think it is such a great place.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joyce Cox Lead inspector