

Weoley Castle Nursery School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 103133 |
| Local Authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 308230 |
| Inspection date | 16 January 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Hazel Callaghan |

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

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| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–4 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 52 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Bruce Harvey |
| Headteacher | Lesley Harris |
| Date of previous school inspection | 5 March 2001 |
| School address | 109 Weoley Castle Road Weoley Castle Birmingham B29 5QD |
| Telephone number | 0121 4271058 |
| Fax number | 0121 4265692 |

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|--------------------------|-----------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The children at Weoley Castle Nursery are predominantly from families of White British backgrounds. Very few children come from minority ethnic groups and it is unusual for children to be in the early stages of learning English. Many children have a limited range of knowledge, skills and experiences when they start in the Nursery. A quarter of the children have been identified as having learning difficulties especially in speech and language. The Nursery is part of a developing children's centre and provides a range of services, which support local families and their children. The before and after school care provision were also inspected as part of this single inspection event.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Weoley Castle is a good school with many outstanding features. At its heart is the staff's dedication to meeting the personal and learning needs of all children. The levels of care, support and guidance provided are excellent. One parent's comments were typical of many, 'Children are nurtured and cared for with dedication.' Children consequently feel safe and secure and grow in confidence. They make good progress in their personal development and in their learning because teaching is good and they want to come to school.

The Nursery provides a rich learning environment in which children flourish. Teachers are skilled at responding to children's own interests. They develop children's skills effectively through teacher led activities and by providing opportunities for children to experiment and explore for themselves. Children consequently achieve well and reach standards that are often above those expected. The strongest areas of learning are in children's personal development. Children are confident to talk about their activities and show excellent skills of self-organisation and perseverance. Children's interest and enjoyment in their work are extremely good and this prepares them well for their next stages of learning. Teachers monitor children's progress well and this informs the planning of activities and ensures the energy of learning is maintained. Boys and girls achieve similarly well in all areas except in the development of language skills. In this aspect boys do not achieve as well as the girls. Those children with learning difficulties make good progress from their various starting points. The curriculum is well adapted to meet children's various learning needs and good levels of support are provided so that all are able to access the wide range of opportunities provided. An appropriate variety of equipment to support children's learning is available. Even though this includes computers and digital cameras, the development of information and communication technology (ICT) is not as advanced as other areas of the curriculum. Opportunities to extend children's learning through ICT are being missed. Plans to improve this provision have been made but are not yet in place.

Another outstanding feature of the Nursery is its partnership with parents and its cooperation with a wide range of agencies to support both families and children. Tremendous effort is put into supporting families, as staff recognise this ensures support for children as well. This, and the many other aspects of the provision, are led very well by staff at all levels. The headteacher provides a strong direction for the development of the school and she has been the force for many of the outstanding features. Her vision has driven changes but it is the strong teamwork and commitment of all staff and governors that have enabled the school to make good improvement, especially in curricular development and in the high standards of personal and pastoral care. The dedication and skill provided by all staff is a sure indicator of the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

As a nursery school, the Foundation Stage is covered by the Overall Effectiveness section above

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable boys to achieve as well as the girls in their language development.
- Develop the ICT provision so it further supports teaching and children's learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children's attainment when they start in the Nursery is wide-ranging but generally below that usually found, especially in children's language skills, social development and physical dexterity. Under the sensitive and skilled teaching all children achieve well to reach standards that are often above those expected when they move on to the infant school. Children make good progress in developing their personal and social skills. Their confidence grows as their abilities in language and mathematics improve. Successful opportunities to explore and experiment enable them to develop a good range of skills and knowledge. Children's early writing skills are well promoted, but boys do not make as much progress as the girls in most aspects of language development. Those children who have personal, social or learning difficulties are identified quickly and are provided with good levels of additional support and care. They 'blossom' under this encouragement and make similar progress to their peers from their different starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's attitudes to learning are excellent. Children find delight in many of their activities and gain a real sense of awe from their discoveries. They really enjoy their tasks and are developing into confident and happy children who are eager to set to work. Their independent working skills are exemplary. They plan their activities, organise resources and are beginning to consider how to improve what they do. Strategies to support those children who start school with poor social skills are effective and behaviour throughout the Nursery is good. Children get on well with each other. They share toys and resources and calmly accept each other's way of working. Children of all backgrounds get on well together although their awareness of different cultures is not developing as effectively as other aspects. Given their very young age children show good understanding of how to be healthy and safe. They enjoy eating healthy food and recognise where they have to be careful in their play. Children make a good contribution to the life of the school and enjoy acting as helpers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff have a good understanding of how children learn and they provide a stimulating environment that motivates children's curiosity and interest. They are highly effective in developing children's personal and social skills and in promoting children's enjoyment of learning. The questions staff ask stimulate and extend children's ideas. Children's own interests are encouraged and used as the basis of new activities. Staff naturally adapt their teaching to match children's abilities and maturity, setting up new challenges and additional opportunities to extend their skills. Adult led tasks and the choice of resources made available for children to use are planned from observations of children's learning. Gaps in their learning are identified and additional activities planned to meet their needs. Plans do not always clearly identify what it is that children are to learn next but the activities usually promote their steady good progress. Those children who need additional support are identified early and given very good levels of attention so they achieve as well as their peers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The strength of the curriculum is the way teachers use children's own interests, and so children's skills as learners are developed. They are able to plan, execute and review their activities. There is an effective balance of adult led activities alongside children's independent play that provides good opportunities for learning and ensures that the basic skills are promoted successfully. Children's creative development is stimulated by a wide range of resources that enable children to express themselves and experiment. These opportunities ensure that children of all abilities make good progress under the watchful eyes of the staff who provide support and encouragement as it is needed. The outside area has been well designed to make the best use of limited space and many children benefit significantly from the additional opportunities to experiment and explore. Links with business and other outside agencies also provide additional support for many activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The pastoral and personal support and care given to all pupils are outstanding. There is an excellent partnership with parents, which starts before the children begin in the Nursery. Large numbers of outside agencies are used to provide support and care for families as well as the children. Key workers in the Nursery forge strong bonds with the families of children in their group and this ensures that communication is effective and support mechanisms work well. All aspects of keeping children safe and secure are excellent. Attendance to the Nursery is not compulsory but staff encourage parents to send their children regularly and to arrive promptly.

There are very effective systems for monitoring children's progress. All staff are involved in tracking their development, and strengths and difficulties in children's learning are discussed thoroughly. Gaps in learning or areas of concern are quickly picked up and activities planned to support children's better progress. The important next steps for each child are identified carefully and shared with all staff and parents. This ensures that all children are given the support and guidance they need to make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The Nursery is a happy place where staff, parents and children work extremely well together. Parents have huge respect for the leadership provided by the headteacher. One wrote, 'Her vision, high standards and professionalism filter through to all staff.' This creates a strong team of committed professionals who strive to provide the best care and learning for all children. Recent changes in responsibilities have been welcomed by staff who at all levels are leading aspects of the nursery development exceedingly well. Not all initiatives have had time to take full effect, such as the plans for improving the ICT provision, but the positive impact of changes can already be seen. It is the commitment and dedication of all staff that ensure the outstanding standards of care and support. Evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate and successfully leads to improvement. The efficiency of leadership and management can be seen in the fact that the identified areas in the school improvement plan have been mostly completed a year ahead of time. The development of the children's centre has taken up a great deal of the headteacher's time and the new areas of focus for improvement have not yet been

formally identified. Governors provide good levels of support and their individual expertise has supported school improvement especially in the development of the outside areas and in the formation of the children's centre.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| 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 | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 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

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|--|---|
| 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

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| 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 |
| 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 |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

17 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Weoley Castle Nursery School, Birmingham B29 5QD

I am writing to say how much we enjoyed visiting your school recently. We loved your pink castle and were pleased that you were having so much fun. I thought you would like to know what we found out about your Nursery.

What we found out:

- We agree with all the parents who wrote to us saying that you have a good school and it looks after you extremely well.
- You make good progress in most of your work and you often reach standards of work that are better than those of other children of your age.
- Teaching is good and all the adults help you to develop new skills and find out about lots of new things.
- You make good progress in expressing your ideas and you really enjoy your work especially in planning and reviewing your activities.
- You play together sensibly and try hard.
- All the adults in the Nursery work well together to make your activities fun so you want to learn.
- All the adults are helping to make the Nursery better and better.

What we have asked the staff and governors to do to make the Nursery even better:

- To help the boys make as much progress in their language skills as the girls.
- To provide more opportunities for you to use computer equipment.

Thank you for making our visit such a happy time.

Best wishes

Hazel Callaghan Lead inspector

17 January 2008

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Lead inspector