

Brentwood Early Years Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104984
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308726
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Graham Martin

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss C Jones
Headteacher	Mrs S McGrath (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	Brentwood Street Wallasey Merseyside CH44 4BB
Telephone number	0151 638 1567
Fax number	0151 638 1567

Age group	3–5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Brentwood Early Years Centre is a small Nursery school located close to Wallasey docks. It provides education for children aged 3 to 5. The local authority decided to maintain the centre's provision following a review in 2007. Separately managed National Nursery Initiative (NNI) day care is provided for children aged 0 to 5 in the same building. This day-care provision was inspected in December 2007 and a separate report is available. The Nursery has its own governing body to manage a budget delegated by the local authority, and the Nursery and day-care provision share some governors. The area experiences high levels of unemployment and the associated social and economic disadvantage. Most children are from White British backgrounds. Many come from single parent families and mobility is high due to frequent changes in family groups. Attainment on entry is low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good Nursery with several outstanding features. A good standard of care and effective teaching ensure that all children make good progress in the six areas of learning, with exceptionally good progress in their personal, social and physical development. After an uncertain period when the centre's survival was doubtful, there is a re-energised mood of commitment, optimism and partnership giving the centre outstanding capacity to improve. Parents overwhelmingly support and value all that the nursery provides. 'A modern approach with traditional values - superb!' was a comment that typically represented parents' views. Parents fully appreciate the exceptionally good partnership they enjoy with the school that improves their children's quality of life.

Children start Nursery with a wide range of experience, knowledge and skills. Many have delayed speech and language development. Most are already known to the staff from attending the NNI day-care nursery and they settle cheerfully into daily routines. Parents are very pleased that their children are happy, typically reporting how reluctant they are to leave at the end of a session. The children get along exceptionally well, smiling and chatting cheerily about their learning. Their care for each other and eagerness to learn are a tribute to the school's encouragement of their positive attitudes. Consequently, achievement in personal, social and emotional development is outstanding. Achievement in physical development is also outstanding due to the good breadth of indoor and outdoor activities that promote balance, coordination and dexterity. Achievement in all other areas of learning is good.

The children enjoy a rich curriculum that enables them to have fun while learning. Parents appreciate that the school goes 'the extra distance' to give their children rich experiences, such as employing an expert to teach Chinese dance during Chinese New Year celebrations. A 'continuous provision' curriculum means that the children enjoy learning that links with their interests and reflects seasonal events and changes. Although not all children appreciated the flavour of the delicious leek soup they made for St David's day, a comment that they like vegetable soup reflects the children's growing awareness of healthy lifestyles.

Teaching is good. Positive teamwork is reflected in the quality of communication about children's learning and personal well-being. Teachers observe and check children's learning carefully, although formal recording of key steps in learning is not developed well enough to provide comprehensive assessment records. Activities are carefully planned, helping children to be independent with the minimum of adult intervention. Teaching children in small groups, such as playing matching games, promotes good learning in essential language and number skills.

Good leadership, management and teamwork, including improved governance, ensure that the centre develops and improves as planned. The acting headteacher establishes a climate for learning in which every child matters. Governors' committees manage the delegated budget well, ensuring good value for money. The headteacher feels well supported by governors, enabling her to improve the quality of provision for all children and their families. Self-evaluation is exceptionally accurate and reflected in realistic, achievable improvement targets in the centre's improvement plan. This is particularly important as the centre develops its integrated family services alongside its exceptionally good partnership with the day-care providers who share the accommodation.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

As a Nursery school, the Foundation Stage is completely covered by the overall effectiveness section.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the recording of children's progress to aid planning for the next steps in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The children make exceptionally good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and well-being, and in their physical development. In all the other areas of their learning they make good progress. Good teaching enables all children to achieve equally well, many from a very low starting point. Some children exceed the expected levels for their learning by the time they transfer to the Reception year. However, on average, overall attainment by the time of transfer to Reception classes is below that expected nationally. The school's recognition of weaknesses in many children's understanding of number has led to a focus on this area to strengthen progress. Achievement in mathematical learning is good and this is an improvement since the last inspection.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This is a significant strength, aided by exceptionally good partnerships with parents and the partner day-care setting. Children successfully develop high levels of confidence and independence. The expectation to show self-reliance, such as when clearing away after lunch, leads to high levels of maturity. The children's enjoyment of nursery is evident in their eagerness to take part in activities and their willingness to share their learning with adults around them. Attendance is good. Parents value what the school provides and understand the importance of encouraging their child to attend. Many parents report that their happy children are frequently reluctant to leave at the end of a session. Time flies in this nursery because children enjoy being together. They have fun testing out each other's ideas for games to play, such as when tidying the garden using wheelbarrows to carry heavy loads safely. They show a growing awareness of healthy lifestyles, for example, explaining how milk helps them grow strong and how running around outside warms them up when they feel cold. The high quality of their personal and social development gives the children an exceptionally good springboard for their move to 'big' school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff use their good knowledge of the children to provide activities that promote their learning well. They encourage independence and active learning, using minimum levels of intervention only to ensure children's safety and well-being or to raise the level of challenge to move learning on. Indoor and outdoor learning and play areas are used well to promote good development

in all aspects, with resources used particularly well for children to make outstanding progress in their physical development. Good focus group teaching provides opportunities for children to develop essential basic skills, such as matching letters to the beginning sounds of names and numbers to quantities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Staff use the accommodation, grounds and gardens, along with visits and visitors, to enrich children's learning. All this adds good value to the children's knowledge and understanding of the world, in turn, promoting their language and mathematical skills. A good range of resources, celebrations and special events gives the children an appreciation of traditional British culture as well as preparing them for living in a culturally diverse society. Links between the areas of learning are carefully planned and the children enjoy listening to what 'Ginger Bear' tells them about what they are going to learn. As a result, learning across all of the areas is positive and meaningful. 'There is a lot of interactive learning, which is fantastic!' typically reflected the value parents place on the school's work to meet their children's needs and interests.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'I feel that my son is always well looked after at all times', was a typical comment reflecting parents' views about the good standard of care their children receive. Procedures for safeguarding children meet current guidelines. Good communication between staff ensures that children are guided, supported and cared for effectively. Messages from parents about any medical or social concerns they have about their child are shared among staff so that all can keep a watchful eye on that child's particular needs. Parents are confident that they can share any worries confidentially and this helps staff to care for children's short or long-term social or health needs exceptionally well. Assessment of learning is good but systems for recording children's progress are not yet sufficiently well used to ensure that planning always reflects the next steps needed to accelerate learning for individual children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of provision has been sustained well under the leadership of the acting headteacher and the dedicated teamwork of all staff. Exceptionally good self-evaluation leads to a clear identification of what needs to be done to improve. Key targets for improvement have been met or are on the way to being achieved, such as creating a conservatory area to enrich opportunities for indoor play. Good evaluation of staff skills leads to effective identification of staff training needs, such as in meeting food hygiene standards when cooking or baking with children. Parents see the staff as a strong team who have their children's best interests at heart, reflected in comments such as, 'we feel loved and cared for by all the staff'. This view is reciprocated in the exceptionally positive relationships that staff establish with families to improve the children's learning. The much improved contribution that governors make to the management of the school enables staff to focus very effectively on their core responsibilities of education and caring for children and their families.

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	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**

Inspection of Brentwood Early Years Centre, Wallasey, CH44 4BB

Thank you very much for welcoming me to your nursery school. I really enjoyed chatting with you. The things you told me helped me to learn a lot about how much you like coming to school. I am writing to let you know what I found out about your school and how good it is.

I think that your nursery is a good place to learn. Some parts of it are outstanding. Your parents told me how much you like nursery and what fun you have learning. They are very pleased with how well your teachers look after you and give you lots of good things to enjoy doing. I agree with your parents. I liked seeing how well you get along. You are really good at being friendly with each other and sharing your games. I liked seeing how well you learn, especially when you are exercising in the garden or using knives safely to cut up healthy vegetables to make tasty soup! You are good at listening and I like the way 'Ginger Bear' helps you to remember the rules when you are sitting on the carpet.

I have asked your teachers to think of better ways of writing down what you have learned. This will help them to think about what you need to learn next.

Thank you for being such fun and letting me join in with your games and learning in your nursery. Thank you for the lovely soup as well; it was the best I have ever tasted! I wish you all the very best. If you all keep enjoying learning as much as I saw you will have lots of good things to look forward to in life.