

St Philips Marsh Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108893
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	309828
Inspection date	16 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Patricia Davies

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo Gray
Headteacher	Simon Holmes
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	Albert Crescent St Philips Marsh Bristol BS2 0SU
Telephone number	01179 776171
Fax number	01179 776171

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Philips Marsh Nursery School is situated in an industrial area of the city with little housing in the immediate vicinity. As a result, many of its children come from families living in areas close by and in other parts of Bristol. The majority of children attend part time, joining the school in the term following their third birthday. Attainment on entry varies from year to year, but is broadly as expected for children of this age. A large proportion of the children are from White British families and a very small minority are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just above average. A new headteacher joined the school this term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Philips Marsh is a good school with some exceptional features. At the core of its work is a conspicuous attention to children's welfare and well-being. Such is the school's success that it is impossible to tell which children are already familiar with the school's expectations and well established routines and those who have been at school for just one or two days. Behaviour is excellent and all children work and play together harmoniously and with great enjoyment. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with the school and particularly with its outstanding care and support. This comment from one parent sums up a view expressed by many: St Philips 'has provided the most fantastic foundation for my children, giving them the confidence, enthusiasm and social skills to make the step in to school'. Achievement is good, enabling children to leave the Nursery with standards above the expected levels. The school'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.

Staff are skilled and committed – also qualities much praised by parents. Teachers and nursery nurses work side by side and take equal responsibility for developing and monitoring the curriculum. There is a wide range of activities and good quality resources, especially in the extremely well developed and stimulating outdoor area. Different aspects of learning are linked together well, although staff do not always make the most of every opportunity to develop language and literacy skills and mathematical development and so promote children's academic achievement to the full. 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. This approach is particularly strong for the children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum leadership has developed successfully since the school's last inspection through whole-school planning and shared accountability for the management of each area of learning. The new headteacher has made a good start. A key development this term has been the decision to share the responsibility for collating and analysing assessment data among all the class teachers. This work is at an early stage, but staff recognise that they will gain more detailed information about areas where children could do better, and be able to set more sharply focused targets and priorities for the future. 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.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

As the school only has children aged 3–5 years, there is no requirement to complete this section. The report covers, in full, the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that adults make the most of every opportunity to develop language, literacy and mathematical skills, in order to promote children's academic achievement to the full.
- Develop the analysis and use of assessment data in order to have detailed information about areas where children could do better and to set sharply focused targets and priorities for the future.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From a varied, but broadly as expected, attainment on entry, all children make good progress, so that standards are above expectations by the time they leave to go on to Reception. This positive beginning makes an important contribution to their future education. A carefully planned curriculum and exciting outdoor activities are important factors in children's good achievement. Most significant of all is children's outstanding progress in relation to their personal and social skills, which creates a solid foundation for learning as a whole. The school's assessment information shows that the vast majority of children had reached high standards in this area when they left last summer. Progress is not as rapid in other important areas of learning, such as language, literacy and mathematical development. This is because the school does not yet apply the same consistent attention to promoting academic knowledge and understanding at every opportunity, as it does to nurturing children's personal development.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Racial harmony and relationships with adults and other children are of a high order. Children share their activities happily with others, ready to give someone else the chance to have a go with the computer and able to explain the importance of taking turns. Independence and initiative develop quickly. Small responsibilities, such as raking up the leaves in the outdoor area, give children considerable pleasure and help them to make important contributions to their community. Children are quick to respond to those very special experiences, such as raindrops on a spider's web or tiny pools of water collected on giant leaves in the bog garden.

Considerate movement around the space during play and very sensible use of scissors and sellotape illustrate children's fast developing awareness of safety. Their readiness to wash their hands and eat fruit at snack time show a rapidly expanding understanding of the importance of good hygiene and healthy eating.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school's good teaching and learning are characterised by a constant focus on encouraging children's social skills and independence. Children respond extremely well to this approach so that, with or without direct adult supervision, they are always motivated and busy. This approach is the main thrust of activities in the first half of this term as staff ensure children settle quickly into school life. Conversation with children is frequent, friendly and sensitive, but staff do not always make full use of every opportunity for extending children's language, as a way to further their mathematical development, for example. This is especially true of the more incidental occasions, such as snack time.

Where teaching is particularly successful, no chance is missed to ensure that every child takes a full part. For example, using children's home language, where it is not English, and 'signing' to include those with hearing difficulties, results in some high levels of progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curriculum planning and review is a whole-staff enterprise and ensures that it is consistently of a good quality. The carefully planned introduction of new children to the school's daily life and expectations highlights the commitment of staff to planning activities that meet children's needs. Areas of learning link together well, although planning has yet to fully exploit these links to, for example, engage boys in writing activities at the earliest opportunity and ensure that play activities are always academically purposeful.

While its physical location is not best placed for taking children out on visits in the immediate area, the school makes good use of visitors and its own facilities for adding richness and considerable enjoyment to children's learning. The once hardcore space outside has a host of different sensory experiences and opportunities for physical exercise. Resources indoors and out are varied, plentiful and safe. Visitors include the local fire service and police, but parents also come in to school to share their culture and religious festivals. This is just one way in which the ethnic backgrounds of all the children are celebrated and used successfully to extend their experience and encourage respect for each other. Environmental projects, like composting, give children a strong sense of their responsibilities to the wider community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Promoting children's welfare and personal development lies at the heart of the school's work and is its greatest success. There is meticulous attention to hygiene, from spotless toilets to clean and tidy dining tables. First aid arrangements are extremely thorough, and there are robust procedures for informing parents of any injury and preventing the spread of germs when children are ill. Arrangements for safeguarding children and assessing risk are all in place. So, too, are checks on absence, so helping to promote the children's good attendance. Ever mindful of the needs of its families, the school now offers care for a small number of children before and after normal hours.

Comprehensive assessments of children's achievement ensure work is matched carefully to their needs. There is extensive support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with detailed 'care-plans', focused targets, extremely strong links with outside agencies and formal checks with parents on the quality of provision. A special audit is made of the needs of those learning to speak English as an additional language to make sure that support is targeted correctly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Children benefit from a stable and experienced staff that works closely as a team. The new headteacher is keen to maintain and build on the school's current strengths, and is already seeking to translate the same high levels of progress in children's personal development into other areas of learning. Self-evaluation is secure and accurate and the school knows clearly where it needs to go. This good self-knowledge and its success to date show the school to be well placed to bring about further improvement.

The monitoring role of curriculum coordinators has moved on since the school's last inspection and they play an influential part in the school's improvement. They check children's progress in lessons, but have yet to clearly identify where teaching is in need of further refinements. A crucial change this term is the delegation of responsibility for recording and analysing data about children's performance. This initiative has just started, but staff are already identifying ways in which they can gain more detailed information and use this to pinpoint exactly where achievement can be improved. Governors have also prepared themselves well to take a full part in monitoring the school's effectiveness.

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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	2

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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?	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?	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 October 2007

Dear Children

St Philips Marsh Nursery School, Bristol BS2 0SU

This letter is to tell you some of the things we found out when we visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and thank you for chatting to us. I particularly enjoyed looking at your wonderful outdoor area and spotting the stone crocodile hidden under the leaves!

Lots of your mums and dads wrote to us to say how much they like your school and how much you enjoy it too. We agree with them – you go to a good school and all the adults work really hard to make it even better.

Here are some other important things we found out.

- Some of you have only been in school for a couple of days but you were all really happy and busy.
- You are jolly well behaved and kind to each other.
- You are all making good progress and learning to do many new things.
- All the adults at school take extremely good care of you.
- You have lots of exciting things to do and thoroughly enjoy taking part.
- You know how important it is to wash your hands and eat fruit to keep healthy and strong.

Here are a couple of things we have asked the school to do to make things even better.

- Make sure that the adults help you to learn as much as you possibly can from everything you do – even at snack time!
- Make sure the adults check your progress very carefully so that they know how to help you to do even better.

With best wishes

Patricia Davies Lead inspector



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Lead inspector