

Ilminster Avenue Specialist Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108896
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	309829
Inspection date	16 July 2008
Reporting inspector	David Curtis

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	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Radford
Headteacher	Pat Rogers
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004
School address	Ilminster Avenue Knowle West Bristol BS4 1BX
Telephone number	01179 030255
Fax number	01179 030255

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. One evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of strategies to improve boys' writing; the impact of SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) on children's personal, social and emotional development; how effectively teachers use data analysis and target setting to improve provision for children; and, how effectively the 'Language for Learning' programme impacts on children's development. The second Additional Inspector evaluated the quality of the school's specialist provision for children who have severe and complex learning needs.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, analysis of school tracking and assessment data, scrutiny of planning and children's work, and discussions with the headteacher, the vice chair of the governing body, key staff, parents and children. The views of parents were gathered from the returns of the Ofsted questionnaire. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's self-assessment is not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a large nursery school, with specialist provision for up to 20 children aged three to seven who have severe and complex learning difficulties. These children are taught in Class 5. In the main nursery, 90 children attend full time. A further 31 attend each morning, and another 31 each afternoon. Children start school with skills below those expected, especially in early language and communication. Most children are White British. On leaving the nursery, children transfer to a range of Reception classes within Knowle West and the surrounding areas of Bristol.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. At the heart of the school's success are the excellent leadership and management of the highly experienced headteacher, who is valued immensely by parents. Together with a dedicated staff team, she has created a school where meeting the needs of each child is paramount and the uniqueness of each individual is celebrated. Governors provide excellent support and challenge. Children, including those in the specialist provision, thrive from the day they start school. They make excellent progress in their learning, with a significant strength in their personal, social and emotional development. Progress in communication, language and literacy is outstanding, especially in speaking and listening. In the last year, boys have made significant improvements in early writing skills through the introduction of interactive whiteboards, which stimulate their enthusiasm to begin the process of mark making as early writers. As a result, they now achieve as well as girls. The school has an excellent capacity to improve further.

The very successful implementation of the SEAL programme has a significant impact on children's personal development. A striking feature is that children are encouraged to express their feelings and to recognise that it is acceptable, at times, to feel emotions such as being happy, sad, cross and angry. For example, one child said, 'I am feeling proud today because I dressed myself.' Quiet zones in each classroom give children the time to share and resolve conflicts together, without an adult. During the course of a day, there are frequent changes made to the 'Feelings Boards' as children express a wide range of emotions.

Excellent teaching and learning, together with an imaginative and vibrant curriculum, are key factors in children's outstanding progress. Teachers and support staff spend quality time developing children's speaking and listening skills through very effective questioning skills. Activities are planned exceptionally well and link closely to the 'stepping stones' for each area of learning within the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff use assessment and tracking of children's progress to identify at an early stage whether individuals or groups are falling behind. When individuals or groups are identified as such, intervention programmes are immediately put in place. The use of the school grounds as a 'Forest School' has a significant impact on children's progress. As well as allowing children to be children, for example in playing hide and seek, their mathematical development is fostered through counting activities and looking at patterns in nature. Their skills in knowledge and understanding of the world are developed especially well through looking at the life cycles of creatures the children find. The 'Forest School' makes a significant contribution to children's excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The quality of care, guidance and support for children is outstanding, and this is recognised and valued by parents. Staff know their children exceptionally well and make very detailed records of their progress. Each child has a key worker with whom they meet on a daily basis. With many children in the nursery having complex needs, the school makes excellent use of a wide range of external agencies to support children and their families. The school is very proactive in reaching out to its parents and the local community to involve both in supporting its day to day work.

Children are happy, secure and confident in school. There are naturally inquisitive and readily engage visitors in conversation. Such is their confidence that when the headteacher took the inspector on a 'Learning Walk', the children took over and left her superfluous! Behaviour is

excellent because children are totally absorbed in learning. They show impressive levels of concentration when working independently or in groups. 'Today's Special Helpers' make a strong contribution to day to day classroom life. They are particularly skilled at organising 'Tidy-up Time' and keep their classmates in line, and the inspector had to stand still and listen too! Children are prepared exceptionally well for transfer to Reception classes in primary schools, and for later life.

The school has been very successful in introducing the 'Language for Learning' project and using it very effectively in partnership with other schools, including the community sports college in Knowle West. The project has engaged parents and the community in looking at the process of learning from childhood to adulthood. One very successful outcome has been the creation of a mural in the local shopping area, which shows a range of learning strategies. In school, children are very engaged in 'Language for Learning' and take great delight and pride in showing and explaining how they achieved, for example a 'Making Connections' sticker. The project clearly has a significant impact on children's outstanding progress. The school recognises that the successes of 'Language for Learning' and SEAL are vital aspects of its work. Inspection findings indicate that these should be continued because of their success and therefore be included within the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum from September 2008.

Parents are delighted with the school, with many writing very supportive comments on the school's work and its impact on their children. One wrote, 'I would like to take the opportunity to say how lucky I am as a parent to be able to send my son to such an outstanding nursery,' and this sums up the views of many. The nursery is very well managed and the teachers and staff are of the highest standard.

Provision in the specialist resource base is outstanding. Standards are well below national expectations in all areas of learning because children's learning and physical difficulties are complex and severe. However, children make excellent progress because learning activities are stimulating and engage pupils' attention. For example, children enjoy experimenting with water in the outdoor area. A clear structure to the day helps those with autistic spectrum disorder to learn. Children successfully tackle activities which they find difficult because they are so very well supported. Their communication and physical development are particularly impressive, with expert help on hand from the therapists on site. Children develop their communication, language and literacy skills extremely well due to the excellent use of additional means of communication where it is appropriate. This enables them to say what they want to learn, express their feelings, and develop positive relationships with other children and with adults.

Assessment information is used extremely carefully so activities are very appropriate to their levels of ability and their age. This information is used very effectively to plan the next steps in learning. Children participate in lessons within the main school through very well organised and supported opportunities throughout the week. Parents are delighted by the high level of care and support the children receive. Classrooms are warm, happy places where children feel safe, and are well supported in a caring environment. The children's enjoyment of school, shown by smiles and happy vocal sounds, is heartwarming to see. Very strong leadership ensures that the provision continues to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

As all of the children are under five, there is no requirement to complete this section. The report covers, in full, the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed the use of SEAL and 'Language for Learning' within the new EYFS curriculum.

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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?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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	1
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

17 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Ilminster Avenue Specialist Nursery, Bristol BS4 1BX

Thank you very much for the lovely day I spent at your school. Would you please thank your parents for filling in the questionnaires and telling me so many wonderful things about your school? I would like to say a very special thank you to those of you in Class 5 who made an extra special effort to come to school on the day I visited. I really enjoyed you showing me all your stickers.

I am delighted to tell you that you go to an outstanding school. But I think you know that already! Your parents certainly do because they told me. These are the things that I think are excellent.

- You make really good progress in your learning.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you get on really well with each other.
- Teachers and staff plan lots of really exciting things for you to do.
- You like the 'Forest School' and being able to play and learn there.
- All the adults really care for you and look after you.
- Those who lead and manage your school want to give you the best possible start to school.

I think that it is very important that for the new children who start in September, staff use SEAL and 'Language for Learning' with them as well as they have done with you.

Thank you again for a wonderful day! I hope that you all enjoy the new schools to which you will be going in September.

Yours sincerely

David Curtis Lead inspector