

Arlesey Nursery School And Childcare Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109424
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	309978
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Binham-Morton
Headteacher	Mrs P Mason
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2004
School address	High Street Arlesey Bedfordshire SG15 6SL
Telephone number	01462 732168
Fax number	01462 732168

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves a mainly White British population, with very few children coming from minority ethnic groups. Hardly any children speak English as an additional language. An average proportion experience difficulties with their learning, mainly in the areas of speech and language. Children are admitted three times a year and the majority transfer to the Reception class in the neighbouring Lower School either for the final two terms or just for the final term of the Foundation Stage. The school also provides childcare for children between 3 and 9 years old for 48 weeks of the year.

Children start in the Nursery at levels that are broadly in line with those expected for their age overall, although a little below the expected level in some aspects of communication, language and literacy.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Children receive a good start to their education at Arlesey Nursery. They settle in quickly because of highly effective induction procedures and the warm welcome they receive from all the adults. 'My daughter settled very well because they make children feel comfortable and welcome' wrote one parent, echoing the views of many. Care and support are excellent and a strong focus on children's personal development mean that children swiftly become confident, independent learners.

Children's personal development is excellent. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Parents report that their children are 'really excited' and 'can't wait to come to Nursery'. An informal start to the school day provides excellent opportunities for parents to talk to adults if necessary. Children happily leave their parents and participate in the wide range of activities on offer. They behave extremely well inside and in the outdoor area. They know the importance of playing sensibly and using the equipment outside safely. They have a good and developing understanding of the benefits of eating healthily and taking enough exercise. They share equipment very well, take turns without being told and willingly tidy up equipment when requested, making an excellent contribution to Nursery life. Their high levels of confidence and independence prepare them well for the next stage in their education.

Children achieve well in the Nursery and leave with standards that are higher and sometimes much higher than usually found in most areas of their learning. Their knowledge of letters and sounds and their skills in writing are lower than expected however, and the school has rightly identified these as areas for improvement.

The broad, exciting curriculum caters very well for children's different needs and interests. Teaching and learning are good. Adults gain a comprehensive picture of children's progress through frequent observations and assessments. Progress folders are readily available for children and parents to enjoy and appreciate achievements since their children's early days in the Nursery.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear view of the school's performance and has involved governors well in this process. Other senior staff are beginning to take a more active role in monitoring provision but these systems have not been in place long enough to show a real impact on teaching and learning. The Nursery has made good progress since the last inspection and is well placed to continue to improve in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

As this is a Nursery school, judgements of the quality of the Foundation Stage do not appear separately but are as set out in the Overall Effectiveness section above.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the children's knowledge of sounds and letters and their skills in writing.
- Extend the roles of senior staff in monitoring teaching and its impact on children's learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well. A strong focus on developing children's self-esteem, confidence and independence means that levels of personal, social and emotional development are exceptionally high and these consequently have a marked impact on other areas of their learning. Their knowledge and understanding of the world and their physical and creative development are much higher than expected for their age. Mathematical development exceeds that expected for children of this age. Reading and language skills are broadly in line with expectations, but their knowledge of sounds and letters and their skills in writing are below those expected for their age. The school has already identified the need to improve these aspects of children's development.

Children who experience difficulties with their learning make excellent progress because of the high levels of care and support they receive from all adults in the Nursery.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. They are interested, independent and confident learners, not afraid to attempt new activities or to make mistakes and learn from them. They take turns using equipment and are careful to watch out for one another's safety while playing outside. They contribute very well to their school community by helping one another and adults. They present concerts for parents and carers and enjoy visiting the local homes for the elderly to take harvest gifts.

Lunchtimes are pleasant social occasions where children chat happily together while enjoying good quality, healthy school meals. Children's behaviour is outstanding. The wide range of good quality activities and excellent levels of supervision by adults mean that children are keen to participate and so behaviour problems are few. The vast majority of children attend regularly and enjoy all the school has to offer. They are well prepared for their future education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Relationships between staff, children and parents are strong and underpin the high levels of trust that parents have in the Nursery. Staff work well together to plan and prepare activities and to share information about children's progress. There is a high emphasis on providing practical activities to engage children's interest, promote their independence and stimulate their language development. However, adults also arrange special focus activities where they have more input to what children actually learn. In one such session, children were painting pictures of the geraniums they had grown in the Nursery garden. The key worker encouraged them to observe the leaves and petals closely, and use the colours provided to mix the appropriate shades.

Staff are beginning to develop the use of their excellent assessment information to fine tune the opportunities provided for specific children to move forward even more effectively, especially in the weaker aspects of literacy. They have also recently begun to teach sounds and letters in

a more structured way but this initiative has not been in place long enough to have raised standards so far.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The rich and stimulating curriculum provides a wealth of relevant and practical activities inside and outside. Opportunities for role-play are outstanding and support children's language development extremely well, especially those who begin school with difficulties in this area. Children are quick to adapt the experiences offered, using their imagination to change the play house outdoors to a 'building site' for example, where they 'measure' and 'construct' new flats. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning although adults track them carefully to ensure they access a wide range of experiences. Very good use of information and communication technology (ICT) engages children's interest and extends their skills in many areas. One three-year-old for example, spent a considerable time manipulating monsters on the computer screen, and, with the help of his key worker, mastered positional language such as 'forwards' and 'backwards'. Reading skills are promoted very well through regular story times, a lending library and a cosy book area. The school has recently extended the opportunities for children to develop their writing skills through role-play. 'Police officers' carry notebooks and clipboards for example, to record traffic violations by bicycles on the playground.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The Nursery is safe and secure and staff work very closely with parents to ensure their children's well being. Staff are regularly trained in child protection procedures and risk assessments are carried out rigorously. Health and safety matters are dealt with effectively and quickly. There are very good systems in place to assess children's progress. Daily observations and evaluations give an extremely full picture of children's achievements. These provide an excellent source for parents and children to appreciate the progress made since their early days in Nursery. Staff provide very effective guidance to children on their transition to the next school so that they settle in quickly and comfortably.

The school cares very well for children who experience difficulties with their learning, including those with speech and language problems and those with more significant physical difficulties. Staff have a clear idea of the needs of these children and provide excellent levels of support and encouragement to enable them to take a full part in the curriculum. Several parents paid tribute to these levels of care, one writing, 'The staff have been wonderful in trying to understand her needs and very supportive to her and us. In the past few months she has changed completely and the progress she has made is amazing.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides calm and sensitive leadership, managing staff well and maintaining excellent contact with parents. Parents appreciate her accessibility, and the way she is always ready to discuss their children or listen to their ideas and opinions. The headteacher monitors the school's work successfully in a variety of different ways and self-evaluation is accurate and robust. Children's folders are evaluated carefully,

teachers' plans checked and assessment data carefully analysed to identify stronger and weaker areas. Last year reading was highlighted as an area needing improvement. Actions taken have improved provision and subsequently children's achievement this year. Senior staff have recently become more involved in monitoring provision although this is in the early stages and has not yet had a significant impact on improving teaching or children's achievements.

Governance is good. Governors have a wide range of skills to support the school, for example in budgeting and premises development. They are not afraid to ask difficult questions to ensure they gain an accurate picture of its performance.

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?	2
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	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	2
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?	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?	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

9 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Arlesey Nursery and Childcare Centre, Arlesey, SG15 6SL

Thank you all very much for being so kind and helpful when I visited your school a little while ago. You were being kind to each other and playing nicely together - well done! I could see you were enjoying all the activities, especially the computers and the sand and water. You help one another and tidy up at the end of the sessions. You told me you enjoy the fruit and vegetable snacks that the teachers put out for you. You enjoy the healthy school dinners, especially the spaghetti bolognese which some of you got all over your faces! Running around and playing outside is really good for you and I was pleased to see you wearing the crash helmets to keep you safe when riding the new bikes down the bank.

You are doing well in nearly all areas of your learning but I have asked the adults to try to organise a few more activities to help you learn your sounds and letters a bit better and improve your writing. I have also asked them to keep a close eye on how well things are working to see if there are any other activities that could be better.

Best wishes

Mary Summers

Lead inspector