

Aclet Close Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113972
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311434
Inspection date	12 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Sue Sharkey

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	3-4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr John Lethbridge
Headteacher	Mr J C N Birbeck
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2004
School address	Aclet Close Bishop Auckland County Durham DL14 6PX
Telephone number	01388 603006
Fax number	01388 603006

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how well the school supports and challenges identified groups or individuals; how well the school makes use of both indoor and outdoor provision when planning the curriculum; how the school successfully develops personal and social skills. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is an average sized nursery school serving an area of considerable social disadvantage. The number of boys is almost twice that of girls. All children are of White British heritage and come from a wide mix of social and economic backgrounds. A smaller than average number of children have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most children join the school in the term following their third birthday.

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 nursery school, which serves its local community extremely well. Parents think highly of it and are full of praise for the excellent staff. They say that their children love attending nursery because of the great variety of different activities and the outstanding level of care. Parents are very appreciative of the extended provision at lunch time and greatly value the support and excellent communication the nursery provides.

Under the guidance of an outstanding headteacher, children achieve well from a starting point, which, for most children, is below national expectations. By the time they leave, the majority of children have exceeded the levels expected for their age, particularly in personal, social and emotional development. Children make very good progress in speaking and listening skills through extensive opportunities which allow them to listen to, and use, spoken and written language. Curriculum planning is excellent, with a clear focus on the enhancement of social skills and language development. Children are excited to come to the nursery and love to learn new things. This is because relationships between staff and children are so good and because a well-planned, stimulating curriculum supports their learning well. All staff have a very clear understanding of how children learn. They are committed to doing their very best for the children in their care and as a result children feel completely safe and secure and enjoy their learning. The care, guidance and support of children is outstanding, and a strength of the school. Child protection policies and safety procedures are in place and checks are made of everyone who works in school. The school has excellent links with a wide range of organisations and agencies that support the all round development of the children well.

Teaching is outstanding. There is an excellent balance between indoor and outdoor activities and very good facilities, providing shelter for sun and rain, enable children to learn outdoors whatever the weather. There is a very good balance between activities led by adults and those that children chose for themselves. Children have opportunities to make music, control the flow of water as they make group decisions on how to best use it, as well as explore and design their own investigations using recycled material. As a result children discover that learning is an exciting activity that comes from a range of stimulating experiences. The school welcomes visitors from the local community and provides outings, such as to a local farm. The curriculum is rich and diverse. Children find out about other countries and plan their 'holiday' in the travel agent discussing where they would like to visit and making arrangements on the telephone. Festivals are celebrated; children make curries and dance to Indian music when it is Divali, experiment with using chopsticks for Chinese New Year and enjoy the Christmas story. The school has been working at ensuring that tasks are always challenging enough for the most able children, and they have succeeded well. Interaction between adults and children is of a high quality, which contributes to the very good gains that children make in the development of their speaking and listening, as well as personal and social skills. Children develop a good understanding of the need to keep healthy and the developing outdoor area helps them to enjoy energetic play. They are enthusiastic during snack time when fruit and drinks are enjoyed, whilst staff foster good social skills. There are a wide range of opportunities for children to take on responsibilities; these include children being responsible for their own actions as well as working with groups of other people, including visitors. The children are encouraged to contribute to the community and enjoy fund raising for local and international projects. Teachers encourage appropriate behaviour by guiding children to develop a sense of what is right and wrong. As a result behaviour is excellent and the relationships between children and with adults

are extremely good. Attendance is above average. Children thrive in the calm and purposeful environment where all are valued and encouraged to succeed. They are confident learners who listen attentively, share and have respect for others. Children are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education. The school is very thorough in assessing what children can do. Planning and record keeping are good and staff regularly observe children's progress in each area of learning. Teachers track this progress very closely and constantly adjust their learning to ensure that they provide the right challenge for each child. The system enables teachers to easily identify the needs of children with learning difficulties or those who have particular gifts or talents. The school works very closely with parents by keeping them up to date about how their children are doing and involving them in their children's learning. An important part of each day is selecting a book to take home and share with parents.

The leadership and the management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher, ably supported by the assistant headteacher, successfully motivates staff and has extremely high expectations. Team work is excellent and the skilled staff continually strive to develop and improve the education of the children in their care. As a result there is excellent capacity to improve. Governors provide good support and increasingly challenge the school's work. The chair of governors has a firm understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas for development but not all governors are involved as actively as they could be. The school works well with other educational establishments, for example, by providing placements for trainee nursery nurses.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

As a nursery school, the Foundation stage is completely covered by the Overall Effectiveness section.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the role played by all governors so that they are able to play a full part in maintaining the school's strong provision and outcomes.

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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	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

13 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Aclet Close Nursery School, Durham, DL14 6PX

I enjoyed my visit to your school very much. Thank you for talking to me and telling me all about the exciting things you do. I could see how much you enjoy being inside school as well as outside. I was very impressed with the way you worked so well together and were able to explore outside and plan how the water on the hill should be used! Your mums, dads and carers think that your school is a very good place to be and I agree with them.

I watched you inside school as well as outside and I was pleased to be able to buy pink flowers from the flower shop as well as be given advice on how to plan my holiday at your travel agent. You were really well behaved all the time. I enjoyed your singing and was pleased to be able to join in with some songs that I knew, particularly 'The Wheels on the Bus.' It was lovely to see you enjoying school and I could tell that you were learning through all the different activities that the grown-ups organise for you. There are many grown-ups who help your headteacher run your school. I have asked the governors if they could be a little more involved, so that they can help make sure that your school continues to be excellent.

Thank you for helping me find out about your school and for being such good children.

Best wishes

Sue Sharkey

Lead inspector