

Borough Road Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113982
Local Authority	Darlington
Inspection number	311437
Inspection date	13 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Linda Buller

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	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Isobelle Hartley
Headteacher	Mrs Lynn Millar
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2004
School address	Borough Road Darlington County Durham DL1 1SG
Telephone number	01325 380785
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Age group	3-4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the following issues:

- the level of development of children's communication, language and literacy knowledge and skills
- the effectiveness of the school's use of assessment information in matching teaching and the curriculum to individual needs
- the contribution of monitoring and evaluation at all levels to school improvement.

Evidence was gathered from the school's records of children's progress and the assessments of the standards they attain, records of internal and external monitoring and evaluation, from observing teaching and learning and from discussions with children, staff and governors. Parents' responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were also analysed. 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 its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included in this report.

Description of the school

The Nursery is situated within the town centre and serves an area that has higher than average levels of disadvantage. Children attend the Nursery part-time in either mornings or afternoon sessions. The Nursery shares its building with a private provider thus facilitating flexible wrap-around care for children from 7.30 am until 6.00 pm. Most children are of White British heritage. There are a small number of children with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities and some vulnerable children who have additional support. The school supports families by hosting courses run by Life Long Learning and by providing information about other extended services.

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 school with outstanding features. The levels of care, support and guidance provided are excellent. Children consequently feel safe and secure and grow in confidence. Underpinning the children's success is the detailed knowledge which staff have of each child through regular observations of their progress and the outstanding relationships which they build with children and their parents and carers. Parents are delighted by the individual attention their children receive and the comfortable, interesting and safe environment in which they learn. As one said, 'I chose this nursery because of its child centred approach and inclusive nature.' A firm but fair and supportive environment helps all the children to thrive. Children love coming to school and their attendance is good. The school meets all the requirements for safeguarding children. There is a strong emphasis on providing wrap-around care, ensuring the building is secure and on children knowing how to move around it safely.

Children's skills on entry to the nursery are well below that typical for their age, the vast majority have underdeveloped speaking and listening skills. Their skills of personal, social, emotional and mathematical development are also well below those typical for children of their age. Although many do not reach the expected targets when they leave the nursery, they make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. Children make very good and often outstanding progress in their personal, social and emotional development and in the development of their language skills for communication and thinking. This is because these are the areas where teaching and the curriculum is highly effective. Staff take every opportunity to encourage children to listen carefully and to practise and extend their vocabulary. Enrichment activities are used particularly successfully, for example, children are able to discuss with enthusiasm those things which they investigated and explored during a recent farm visit. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly those with language delay, have clear targets to support their learning and all adults respond to their needs. Older and more able children know when involved in story time that print carries meaning and some are developing an understanding that it is an author who writes the story and an illustrator that draws the pictures. They are beginning to recognise the initial sound of their names and make a good attempt in their mark making at letter formation. Opportunities to build on this knowledge in linking sounds and letters are at times missed.

The good quality of teaching and learning, and the well enriched curriculum ensure children have time to explore, investigate or solve problems for themselves. Each morning and afternoon session maintains a careful balance between small group tasks, with clear and focused academic intentions and freer activities designed to encourage children to plan and take responsibility for their learning. One of the strengths of the good curriculum is the way that staff look carefully at the needs and experiences of the children and draw on their ideas when planning future activities. This approach helps children to become keen and motivated learners. The free choice activities are extremely well organised and are monitored closely to ensure that they contribute to children's good progress. During these times, children gain much from a wide range of sensory, practical and physical experience. However, children are not always clear about the educational purpose of their selected activities. Consequently, they do not gain the full benefit from their task that they should, because an adult is not always available to involve them in discussion.

Children's personal development is good; they are consistently encouraged to recognise the difference between right and wrong, the importance of being kind to each other and to share

resources. Consequently, children behave well and thrive in a harmonious and happy environment. Adults successfully encourage children to try out a range of fruits at 'snack time' with positive responses. Activities often include lots of physical movement. As a result, children experience and begin to understand the benefits of regular exercise. The skills children learn, together with the independence they develop, are preparing them well for full time school.

Good leadership and management ensure that the school is effective in judging its performance. Systems of self-evaluation are successful in identifying all the correct areas for improvement. However, these are not then clearly translated into key priorities for improvement within the school development plan. The criteria used to measure how well the school is meeting its targets are not sharp enough. This limits the ability of leaders and managers at all levels to check the impact of new initiatives. Nonetheless, the headteacher, ably supported by the staff team, is always looking for ways to improve the provision. One recent success has been the way in which staff have extended their work on assessing the children when they enter and leave the school. The governing body have fully identified and established their role in the development of the Nursery. Their knowledge and understanding of the school's needs are good and they successfully act as a critical friend. The Nursery's view of itself is accurate and good progress has been made since the last inspection. The school's successful record of improvement shows that its capacity to improve further is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

As all of the children are under five, this section is covered by the 'Overall effectiveness of the school'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure children have a clear understanding of the educational purpose of the activities they select for themselves.
- Ensure that the school development plan identifies clear and measurable success criteria.

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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?	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	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Borough Road Nursery School, Darlington, DL1 1SG

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your Nursery, for showing me your work and taking time to talk to me about your games and activities. I am grateful to your parents and carers who wrote to tell me what they thought of your school. They think that Borough Road Nursery is a good school and I agree with them. I was pleased to see that you behave well and take care of all the interesting things you have to play with. You do lots of new and exciting things each day and really enjoy school. The teachers and all the adults who work with you help you to quickly learn because they know you all very well. Everybody in nursery takes excellent care of you and this helps you to feel safe and happy and gives you the confidence to try out new things. Your outside area is very exciting. I could see how much you enjoy finding out about things, such as what creatures look like under the magnifying glass.

All the adults in your school work very hard and are good at their jobs. I have asked them to do some things to make your learning even better. They are going to use all of the information they have about how well you are doing to make very clear decisions about what the most important things are that will make your school even better. They are also going to help you to understand what it is they want you to learn when you are playing and not working with an adult.

I hope you carry on enjoying your time at Nursery and thank you again for the lovely day I spent with you.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller

Lead inspector