

Highfield Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121784
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314098
Inspection date	8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Hazel Callaghan

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	3-4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Ryan
Headteacher	Josette Mallon
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Finedon Road Wellingborough NN8 4AB
Telephone number	01933 225039
Fax number	01933 272802

Age group	3-4
Inspection date	8 May 2008
Inspection number	314098

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

About half of the children at Highfield Nursery are from families of White British backgrounds and the rest are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. Almost a third of the children are in the first stages of speaking English and as many as 11 different home languages are represented, the largest groups being Gujarati, Punjabi and Polish. Most children start in the nursery with a narrower range of experiences and knowledge than is expected for their age, but the full range of abilities is represented. Children attend one of the two daily sessions. A dedicated children's centre was opened on site in September 2007 under the leadership of the headteacher and governors.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Highfield Nursery is a good school. It continues to grow from strength to strength and has many outstanding features. At its heart is the staff's dedication to meeting the personal and learning needs of all children. The levels of care, support and guidance provided are excellent. Children consequently feel safe and secure and grow in confidence. They make rapid progress in their personal development and in their learning because teaching is good, relationships are strong and children are happy.

The nursery provides a rich learning environment in which children flourish. Teachers are skilled at responding to children's own interests. They develop children's skills effectively through activities they lead and by providing opportunities for children to experiment and explore for themselves. Children consequently achieve well and reach standards that are in line with those expected and often above. The strongest areas of learning are in children's personal development and in their language skills. Children are confident in their tasks and show excellent levels of concentration and perseverance. Children's interest and enjoyment in their activities are extremely good and this prepares them well for their next stages of learning. Staff monitor individual children's progress well, which informs the planning of activities and ensures the momentum of learning is maintained. Systems for assessing children's well-being and involvement are well established and very detailed. The assessment of other areas of learning is satisfactory. It does not always provide a clear view of children's attainment when they start in the nursery, because for some it is low and, although teachers quickly identify children's learning needs, information about their progress is not always well documented at this early stage.

The curriculum is extremely well planned to meet children's various learning needs, including those in the early stages of learning English who are very well supported by bilingual staff. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) make good progress from their various starting points. Good levels of support are provided for all children and they enjoy coming to school. One parent described her child's enjoyment of school, 'My daughter has thrived at Highfield. She loves attending and counts down the days during the holidays until she can return.'

Another outstanding feature of the nursery is its partnership with parents and its cooperation with a wide range of agencies to support both families and children. Tremendous effort is put into supporting families as staff recognise this ensures support for children as well. The headteacher provides strong direction for the development of the school. A comprehensive system for checking children's progress across the curriculum has recently been introduced but there is not yet sufficient information about the progress of different groups of children, such as boys compared with girls and those of different ethnic groups, to enable the school to identify fully where some children may be achieving less well than others. The dedication and skill provided by all staff and the support of governors are clear indicators of the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

As a nursery school, the Foundation Stage is covered by the Overall Effectiveness section above.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers have a secure view of children's abilities when they start in the nursery and use the information to assess clearly their progress in all areas of learning.
- Check the progress of different groups of children so that any differences in achievement are identified and all children make the best progress they can.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children start school, their early language and mathematical skills are below those expected for their age. Their range of experiences is often quite narrow and so their knowledge and understanding of the world is also below average. Under the sensitive care of staff and with high levels of support, children achieve well. They make good progress in all areas of learning and often make very good progress in developing their language skills and personal development. By the time children leave the nursery, they are attaining average standards in all areas and often higher in language development. Many aspects of their personal development, especially their attitudes to learning, are excellent. Children in the early stages of learning English make rapid progress in their understanding and make similar good progress to their peers in other areas of learning. Children with LDD make good progress under the knowledgeable support of staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The outstanding range of activities and excellent relationships enable all children to develop their personal, social and emotional development extremely well. Children's behaviour is excellent and they show care for one another, especially to those children who they know are different from themselves because of specific difficulties. They concentrate on their activities for prolonged periods, both in their self-chosen tasks and during activities led by adults. They share resources and toys sensibly and have a very good understanding of what is fair and not fair. They are developing a good awareness of how to keep safe, learning how to use tools and equipment with care. They enjoy the range of healthy snacks available and most confidently try new fruit and vegetables. Children enjoy doing simple tasks for the adults and respond well to the expectation that everyone helps to clear away. Although attendance to nursery is not compulsory, children are eager to attend.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

All staff have a good understanding of how these young children learn. They provide stimulating activities that are strongly linked to children's interests. Children's understanding is strengthened by activities that build securely on previous tasks. Staff know children well and their progress is regularly discussed so that all adults have a shared view of what the next stage in learning should be for each child. A high number of staff ensure good levels of attention and support. Children consequently develop in confidence and eagerly try new activities. Children's language development is promoted well, especially of those in the early stages of learning English. Bilingual staff use the children's home language to ensure children understand new vocabulary

and to give them confidence to speak. This was well exemplified by the telling of a story to two children partly in their home language and partly in English. The children listened in fascination and enjoyment, sharing their ideas. Significant importance has always been placed on monitoring children's well-being and personal development and this is now extended to all areas of learning, but is not always as well documented.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is stimulating, fun and well planned. There is an outstanding focus on developing children's well-being and personal development. There is an effective balance of activities led by adults alongside children's independent play that provides good opportunities for learning and ensures that the basic skills are promoted successfully. Staff plan together well to ensure all children in both classes benefit from the range of staff expertise, with the result that the curriculum meets children's learning needs extremely well. The outside area is used very well to mirror activities in the classrooms and to provide opportunities to extend children's curiosity and the desire to experiment and explore. Activities that share the wide range of children's cultures are used well to extend children's appreciation and greater understanding of each other's lives. Lots of visits out into the local community and further afield, such as their recent visit to a local farm, provide a huge stimulus for children's enjoyment of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

An excellent partnership exists with parents, which starts before the children begin in the nursery. Key workers forge strong bonds with the families of children in their group, which ensure that communication is effective and support mechanisms work well so children settle happily. All aspects of keeping children safe and secure are excellent and staff ensure all children's personal needs are well met. Those with LDD receive very good support. Staff have learned the Makaton sign language, for example, to support children with significant LDD, and this is also used to good advantage to support those children who have little knowledge of English. Academic support is good. Assessments identify clearly how individual children's learning is developing and this successfully leads planning. Children's targets for the next steps in learning are shared with parents. Children often talk about what they have enjoyed doing and they are developing their awareness of themselves as learners.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Many effective management systems have been developed in the last two years. This has enabled staff to assess accurately most aspects of the nursery provision and develop well-considered targets for improvement. Teachers are developing their new management skills well and many of the staff have been involved in research to explore how they can meet children's needs even more effectively. The headteacher has led these developments well and has correctly identified that the systems for monitoring children's progress now need to focus more on the progress of different groups. The headteacher provides good leadership and a clear vision for the future development of the children's centre so it complements the support for families and children already present in the nursery. One of the nursery teachers is to extend her role into the children's centre. This will enable her to gain a greater understanding of the

early stages of children's development so their abilities when they start in the nursery are more clearly identified. Strong teamwork, the commitment of all staff and an effective governing body ensure the nursery continues to develop very well.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	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?	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	2
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	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?	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 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Highfield Nursery School, Wellingborough, NN8 4AB

I am writing to say how much we enjoyed visiting your school recently. We loved visiting your classrooms and watching you work and play together so well. You were clearly having lots of fun. I thought you would like to know about some of the things we found out about your nursery.

What we found out

- We agree with all the parents who wrote to us saying that you have a really good school and it looks after you extremely well.
- You make good progress in your work especially in your language skills and you reach standards of work that are similar to and often better than other children of your age.
- Teaching is good and all the adults help you to develop new skills and find out about lots of new things.
- You really enjoy nursery and all your activities. You play together very sensibly, behave extremely well and try hard. You are kind to one another and play together well.
- All the adults in the nursery work very well together to make your activities fun so that you want to learn.
- All the adults are helping to make the nursery better and better.

What we have asked the staff and governors to do to make the nursery even better

- Make sure that teachers check how well you are doing in all your activities.
- Make sure that teachers ensure all of you are doing as well as each other.

Thank you for making our visit such a happy time.

Best wishes

Hazel Callaghan Lead inspector