

The Arnold Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106826
Local Authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	324471
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Joe Peacock

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	0–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jayne Fitzgerald
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Hague
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2006
School address	Goldsmith Road Rotherham South Yorkshire S65 2LY
Telephone number	01709 828983
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Age group	0–5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Arnold Centre is a children's centre combining the resources of a nursery and early years centre to meet the needs of children from 0 to 5 years and their families. The nursery is an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provider. The under threes' childcare is on a separate site across the road. There is, additionally, enhanced resource provision with places for 12 children, most of whom have very complex needs. The centre serves three large council estates. One in five of the children in the nursery speak English as an additional language. Overall, children's skills on entry to the nursery are well below expected levels. Four out of ten have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mainly relating to speech, language and communication. This is above average. Four out of ten are entitled to free school meals, which is also above average. The centre provides before and after session care, and places for all day extended day care. There is also the Arnold pre-school which is registered for 12 two and a half to three-year-olds on four days each week. A new headteacher started in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Arnold Centre provides children with an excellent start to their education and gives outstanding value for money. Parents are highly satisfied with the outstanding quality of care and fully appreciate the relationship they have with the, 'welcoming and friendly staff who always have time to talk'. The centre has continued to improve since the previous inspection by raising standards, improving attendance and developing the role of governors.

Most children begin Nursery with skills that are well below expected levels, particularly in their communication, language and literacy skills. This is due to one in five of the children being at the earliest stages of speaking English as an additional language. In addition, four out of ten of all children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some of these children have complex learning difficulties. The outstanding quality of teaching and learning provided for all children, and the detailed knowledge staff have through careful assessments of each child's progress, ensures achievement is outstanding for all. Most leave the nursery with skills that are in line with those typical for their age in all areas of learning, having made exceptional progress from their starting point a year earlier. This means that children are extremely well prepared for their future education. The exceptionally good partnership with a range of outside agencies directly supports children with specific or complex needs, and ensures the care and support that they receive from staff is tailored exactly to their needs.

Children's personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. This is because both the curriculum and welfare provision promote personal development in an exemplary manner. It is absolutely obvious that children in the under threes' childcare and the nursery thoroughly enjoy being there and they are developing greater confidence and independence as a result. Children know and understand that eating healthily is very important and the farmhouse breakfast is popular in the morning. Behaviour is outstanding. Children and their parents say they like their trips into the community because they are shown how to cross roads safely.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding throughout. Staff ensure that children develop their unique interests and abilities in a supportive and caring atmosphere. A homely atmosphere is created. For instance, in the day care centre where children are encouraged to accompany staff into the laundry, 'to help them'. Excellent planning and observations mean that children make outstanding progress in their learning and development. The centre closely matches its various programmes for teaching and learning to the new EYFS guidelines, so that all the time children's individual learning needs are being met. There is an excellent balance between the adult-led activities and the ones that children choose for themselves, both inside and outside the building.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has been supported wholeheartedly by senior staff. Together, they have worked hard and successfully to manage the two sites and create a centre with common aims and high aspirations. Governance is outstanding. Governors critically appraise everything the centre is doing in order to further improve provision for every child. This means that there is excellent capacity to maintain continuous improvement.

The quality of provision in the breakfast and tea clubs is good. Children are extremely well cared for and enjoy attending these before- and after-school clubs. Staff provide exceptionally well for children's language and social development. However, the range of children's learning

experiences in the breakfast and tea clubs is limited. In the pre-school, excellent provision ensures a range of specifically tailored activities to interest, engage and develop children's curiosity to learn.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give children in the breakfast and tea clubs a broader range of learning experiences.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children in the day care centre come on in leaps and bounds. Their excellent progress in all aspects of their development is due to the outstanding quality of teaching, care and support. Individualised learning is carefully planned ensuring that the needs of every child are met in all aspects of their development.

Most children enter Nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age and leave at levels in line with those expected for their age. Their achievement is outstanding in all areas of learning. The small proportion who transfer from the day care centre and pre-school setting have more highly developed skills on entry because of outstanding provision in these settings. They too make outstanding progress. The focus on improving communication skills through a wide range of strategies such as the ECAT ('every child a talker') project is highly successful in raising achievement. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with complex learning needs or who are new learners of English, make excellent progress because of the high quality support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

In the day care centre, children have an excellent start to their educational, personal and social life. Babies are happy and settled because they are treasured and nurtured in a warm and welcoming environment. They thrive because staff give them uninterrupted time, playing and talking with them and helping them to respond to and to trust others. Older children thoroughly enjoy the imaginative and interesting range of indoor and outdoor activities and play safely but adventurously. They have a very good understanding of personal hygiene because it is consistently promoted with well established routines for hand washing, for example.

'The nursery has that little something special,' and 'there is nothing more he could want and therefore nothing more that I could want,' are typical comments from parents. Personal and social development is a major strength and impacts significantly on children's attitudes, behaviour and learning. Attendance is good, reflecting how much children enjoy what is provided for them. The child-centred learning with children able to free-flow between activities in each of the classes or the exceptional outdoor area gives them a strong sense of responsibility for their own learning and access to an excellent range of activities. Staff are always on hand to support and guide, helping to raise children's self-esteem as they concentrate and invariably succeed in what they are trying to achieve. All clearly know what is expected of them and their behaviour is exemplary. Rare and occasional bouts of challenging behaviour are quickly and effectively dealt with by staff. Children have a secure knowledge of healthy eating. One child described how milk was good for his teeth and bones, for example. All children are extremely well prepared for the next phase of their learning.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 1

Children's outstanding progress particularly in developing language and communication skills is successfully promoted by highly effective teaching. This also aids the excellent progress of the many who speak English as an additional language. The quality of teaching and learning in each of the three Nursery classes is outstanding. Thorough and accurate observations of children's language and other needs leads to effective teaching in groups and for individual children. Pakistani children, for example, enjoyed sharing the Punjabi word for snake, 'sanp' with the rest of the group in a session choosing and describing objects beginning with the letter 's'. Children learning to bath babies in the water tray never stopped talking about their own babies at home. The excellent relationships between children and staff ensure that children are confident, happy and more than ready to engage in a conversation with anyone. As a result, most make outstanding gains in their learning.

Extremely detailed planning for indoor learning ensures all areas of the curriculum are fully provided for. The planned outdoor curriculum is of similar high quality with exciting and enjoyable learning experiences provided for all. For instance, children enthusiastically beat makeshift drums outdoors, tried to walk on stilts and counted and recorded birds they spotted in the garden. The curriculum promotes academic and personal development exceptionally well. It is enriched by visitors and visits, such as to the local park or post office. Parental involvement is successfully encouraged and many parents stay and play at the start of sessions and attend the many classes such as first-time mums group, fathers group and the 'Weigh and Play' baby clinic. Staff effectively use the wealth of specific and detailed assessment information on children's progress to create programmes of learning which are well matched and helpfully modified to meet individual children's needs. Those who have complex difficulties in learning are particularly well provided for and supported as they work alongside other children and this enables them to make excellent progress.

The quality of provision in the breakfast and tea clubs is good. There are some interesting and enjoyable learning opportunities that have a strong focus on children's language and social development although the range of children's learning experiences is not broad enough. The pre-school makes outstanding provision for children's learning, with interesting and individual activities that arouse children's interest and curiosity because they are so well matched to their needs.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 1

A high level of care is evident throughout the centre. Staff are proficient at self-evaluation and constantly strive to ensure that they give the best provision possible. For example, appropriate training is provided for all staff once the centre has been alerted to the particular learning needs any new entrants may have. The staffs' professionalism, commitment and determination to be ready to meet every child's needs, whatever they are, is evident across the setting.

The promotion of children's welfare is outstanding. The caring staff help make this a very special place for children. All staff are sensitive to young children's needs and there is a strong focus on helping children to enjoy school and to attend regularly. The role and responsibilities

of the highly effective inclusion manager add significantly to the efforts of all staff to ensure every child makes excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development. There are robust policies relating to all welfare matters, such as how to administer medicines and to give first aid. Care is taken, for example, to notify parents about all bumps to the head. Safeguarding procedures fully meet current government requirements. Excellent links with outside agencies enhance the children's welfare and provide invaluable and high quality care and support for children, their parents and staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The Arnold Centre is exceptionally well led and managed by the headteacher and a very experienced deputy headteacher. Highly qualified and experienced staff lead and manage the outstanding day care provision. Staff are proficient at self-evaluation and successfully ensure that they give the best start possible to all children. 'No child will underachieve!' is the central plank at the heart of the centre's improvement plan. Strong teamwork is underpinned by an impressive training programme. All staff have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Self-evaluation is accurate, if a little cautious in some respects. Staff work effectively to ensure equality of opportunity for all. The school's contribution to promoting community cohesion is outstanding. Both the nursery and the day care centre provide a base for the community to seek and find assistance and guidance, in a range of matters, often beyond education. The centre is at the heart of the local community and charity events such as a sponsored 'toddle' support the global community. Governance is outstanding. Most governors are parents and so willingly give their time and expertise to monitor and evaluate all aspects with a view to bringing about improvement. Detailed evaluations by governors, for example, highlight how well the school is achieving its current key priorities. As a result of this uniformly strong and effective leadership and management, the school has an excellent capacity to go on improving.

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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 is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
The standards[1] reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children?	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
The extent to which 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 effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?	1

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you so much for helping us during the inspection of your centre. We think that it is outstanding in just about every respect. We can see why you enjoy every day so much and why your parents and carers have so many good things to say about it. There is so much for them to be involved with too.

We enjoyed seeing you playing outdoors in your very exciting garden. The drummers made a lot of noise and it was amazing to see the speed you pedalled at down the sloping path. You all behaved incredibly well and that is not surprising as all the different activities in each of the classrooms certainly keep you busy.

One of your favourite story books called 'Laura's Star' says that something wonderful, something magical is happening here. We agree! Like Laura, we met a whole bunch of little shining stars. All of you!

Your headteacher and all the staff are doing a great job so we did not find too much that needed to be improved. We think that those of you who stay to breakfast and tea club could have more to do after you have finished eating. We hope staff will plan lots of challenging and interesting things in future for you to enjoy.

Thank you again for talking to us so much and making us feel so welcome.