

St Edmund's Nursery School and Children's Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107190
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	324546
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Lesley Clark

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)	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Marie Hinchlisse
Headteacher	Ms Anne-Marie Merifield
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2005
School address	Washington Street Girlington Bradford West Yorkshire BD8 9QW
Telephone number	01274 543282
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Age group	0–5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This large popular inner-city Nursery school, situated in an area of considerable economic and social disadvantage, draws children from across Bradford because of its good reputation and flexible provision. It has trebled in size in the last two years. The intake reflects the ethnic, social, religious and cultural diversity within the city. Some children attend full time and some have part-time places. Most children are of Asian heritage and speak English in addition to a home or community language. A far higher than average proportion of children are at a very early stage of learning English on joining the school. The most prevalent home languages used by these children are Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati and various Eastern European languages. Approximately half the children are supported by bilingual staff who are funded by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG). The school receives additional local authority funding for resourced provision for up to 16 children with severe and complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They attend for half-day sessions and are fully integrated into the main school. The school is involved in a national pilot for two-year-old children and some children attend the Nursery under this scheme.

The school has undergone a rapid succession of changes fundamental to its organisation and operation in the last two years. Originally a Nursery for three to five-year-olds, it was re-designated in November 2006 as an integrated Nursery and Children's Centre set up in collaboration with Bradford Early Years Childcare and Play and run by the governing body. It is now known as St Edmund's Nursery School and Children's Centre. It offers year-round childcare to local families from 07.45 to 17.45. The Children's Centre was not part of the inspection. The inspection evaluated the educational provision, learning and development for all children from birth to five in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Edmund's Nursery is an outstanding school. It makes outstanding EYFS provision for all children. Parents think so, too, and many wrote to say so. Typically, parents comment on how their children 'grow in confidence in a short space of time' and how 'they benefit socially, emotionally and academically' because of 'the friendly, caring staff who put children first'. Children are given an impressive range of memorable learning experiences during their time in the Nursery. They move on to full-time schooling extremely well prepared for future success because they have developed into mature, independent and self-reliant children with a thirst for learning. Adults successfully create a welcoming and secure environment where children's welfare is paramount. For parents, there are first-class links with the children's centre in terms of partnerships with health professionals, adult education and community relations. Leaders have made the extended provision as flexible as possible to cater for the needs of parents who work or study outside the home. The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding.

All groups of learners make exceptional progress because staff have extremely high expectations and ensure that each child's unique needs are met. Achievement is outstanding. Through focusing initially on children's personal, social and emotional development and on promoting language skills, staff quickly develop children's readiness to learn and their ability to communicate. Expert bilingual support in the child's home language enables children to gain a rapid understanding of English. This means that they soon use English confidently and accurately, getting them all off to a flying start. From well below average starting points, most children reach the levels expected in all areas of learning at the end of Nursery and a small proportion exceed them. Outstanding support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in the resource provision, ensures that they, too, make measurable gains in their learning. The high level of challenge for more able children ensures that they make outstanding progress.

Children's personal development is outstanding because of the excellent provision for their welfare, their physical and emotional well-being and their learning and development. The school successfully enables children to learn through discovery, play, talk and first-hand sensory experiences. This means that learning becomes a magical journey of discovery, for example, when children discovered what happened to ice when they added ink and shaving foam to it. Children have limitless, daily opportunities to make decisions and to explore and solve problems. This helps them to become increasingly confident, independent learners. Relationships between adults and children are exemplary. Adults nurture and support, rather than direct, children's learning. This ensures that children make choices and organise themselves well. Children from the very earliest age are accustomed to making their own decisions. Thus they indicate when they want to sleep or to go outside and two to three-year-olds decide when they are ready to access more advanced provision. By the age of three, children competently tidy away resources without being prompted. They work and play happily and productively, frequently asking questions to further their understanding. They are happy, sociable learners who respect each other's needs extremely well. Children learn very well from each other's first-hand experience of diversity in Britain and the wider world, which contributes to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Leaders have a very accurate view of the school, though they are reluctant to grade everything outstanding as, 'you can always be better'. This illustrates the exceedingly high expectations which characterise this school. Outstanding leadership by the headteacher and deputy

headteacher ensures that the school constantly seeks to improve its current practice. Exemplary partnerships exist between providers, parents and other agencies who work together to ensure that children are well protected and that their needs are fully met. Understandably, given the extensive changes in the last two years, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have shouldered the major part of checking the quality of provision. Whilst this has been successfully extended to include the managers of the birth to three and resource provisions, the role of the staff leaders of the three to five-year-olds is underdeveloped. This means that they are less closely involved in checking the effectiveness of those aspects of the provision for which they are responsible. Supportive governors demonstrate loyalty and commitment to children, families and staff, as well as asking probing questions to challenge the school's leaders. Current successes, excellent teamwork among all the staff, innovative practice and the desire to do better, confirm the school's outstanding capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the role of the leaders of the three to five-year-old children's provision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

From well below average starting points, roughly 80% of children reach expected levels in all areas of learning by the end of Nursery and 10% exceed them. Children make outstanding progress, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, as a direct result of the very high quality provision. Each child is treated as an individual and planned learning activities meet their needs exceptionally well. Children from different minority ethnic backgrounds make outstanding progress, as do those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in the resourced provision for children with severe and complex learning needs. This is because of the exceptional care and support that the children receive, especially in terms of language development. More able children do exceptionally well because staff challenge them to the full. The school's assessments show a rising trend, with children who spend longest in the Nursery making the most rapid gains. All children play a dynamic role in their learning and respond to challenges with great enthusiasm.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children absolutely love coming to the Nursery. Their attendance is above average and their behaviour is outstanding. They are busy, active learners from the time they start, to the time they leave at the end of the day. From a very early age, children learn to look after themselves and each other. For example, two-year-olds decide when they need a sleep or a nappy change and take charge of putting their blanket or dummy away in their individual baskets. This high level of personal responsibility continues, with children as young as two-and-a-half helping to serve meals at lunchtime and clear their plates. As a result, children are highly independent, confident and self-reliant from an early age. They play together well and are kind to each other. They have an exceptionally good understanding of why it is important to lead healthy lives and are willing to try to eat different fruit and vegetables. They know how to keep safe and understand, for example, that when they want to move quickly they must take care not to bump into others. At the same time, they are physically lively and not fearful, because they know their limits. Children show a good understanding of personal hygiene, such as washing hands before and after meals. They have a well-developed sense of community, both in their

Nursery and in the wider world, through fund-raising or cooperating with others to build dens in an outdoor centre, for example. With their self-assurance and social confidence, matched by good communication, literacy, language and numeracy skills, children are extremely well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 1

Children learn exceptionally well. For many years the school has operated a successful 'key worker system' whereby each child has a special adult to relate to. Learning opportunities meet all children's needs exceptionally well and keep them actively involved. Based on thorough and accurate observations, staff set up a full range of interesting and thought-provoking activities, both inside and outside, to challenge children to explore and find out for themselves. This includes two to three-year-olds working with an artist each week, or older children taking part in a 'personalised learning' scheme. During this time they spend one day a week in an outdoor centre, working cooperatively to put up a tent or to follow a woodland trail, for instance. Staff skilfully play alongside children, helping them to learn while not doing it for them. Children have complete freedom to exercise choice from the moment they are able to do so and are free to learn indoors or outdoors as they choose. This means that they learn at the right pace for their age and stage of development and that they are never bored. As a result, children concentrate for long periods. Adults ask questions that make children think for themselves and so they learn rapidly through discussing their ideas. Parents particularly appreciate the support and care given to children in the resourced provision who have significant special educational needs. They benefit enormously from mixing daily with the other children, using the extensive outdoor environment and also spending time with their own special people. Bilingual staff provide timely interventions throughout each session, so that the many children who are at the very early stages of learning to speak English experience the security of learning in their home language. This helps them to make faster progress.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 1

Children blossom here, whatever their background or individual need, because the school takes extremely good care of them. Vetting procedures for all adults who work with children are robust. Parents comment that their children are, 'confident and happy largely due to the excellent care'. Stringent safeguarding, and health and safety procedures are in place, with daily checks to ensure that equipment and resources are safe for children to use. Children enjoy learning about safe, healthy practices as they mop up spillages or practise using tools and equipment, both inside and outdoors. The outdoor area is extensive and well resourced. It provides children with daily opportunities to be adventurous under close, adult supervision. This enables them to become aware of their own limitations without being fearful. The school works extremely well with parents, carers and other organisations to help children achieve as well as possible. Outstanding links between rooms give additional security to children and their parents. The school promotes attendance well and makes good use of extended services and outside specialists to aid children's progress. Children in the resourced provision benefit from very effective, external expertise as well as skilled provision in the Nursery itself. As a result, they come to school happily and spend their days absorbed in stimulating activities with their friends.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school has gone from strength to strength under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The main focus recently has been to improve partnerships with parents and in this it is resoundingly successful. Parents are fully included in their children's learning. The parent and child singing group, where parents of children with complex learning needs discover how much they can share with their children, the weekly fruit and vegetable shop and the 'records of achievement', are just some of the ways in which parents are invited to contribute to their children's learning and development. Parents comment on how much they value the 'Better Together Days' which they see as 'productive and fun.' The main tool the leadership team uses to ensure equally high standards of provision for all age groups is to check extremely thoroughly on the quality of teaching and learning in order to determine what works and what needs to be changed. The process of developing the leadership skills of others in the staff team has begun, but the leadership of the three-to-five provision is still underdeveloped, especially in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of different areas of learning and suggesting improvements. The leadership and management of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are outstanding. Equality of opportunity is fully promoted. The impact is seen in the outstanding progress made by all learners at each stage of their education.

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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	2
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 for welcoming me to your Nursery. I loved watching you work and play. I especially liked the pile of ice that you were adding ink and shaving foam to! You have great fun both indoors and outside and are very busy all the time, finding out new things. I was amazed to see you serving lunch and sitting chatting like grown up people. You behave extremely well and clearly enjoy learning.

Your Nursery is outstanding. This means that it gives you the best chance to learn. Your special adults take extremely good care of you to help to keep you safe but they still let you try things out for yourselves. When I sat and listened all I could hear were your happy chattering voices as you worked and played together. No wonder you listen to stories so intently. I wish I could stay to hear what Hedgehog and Penguin get up to in their spaceship and what they do with the moonstones!

Everyone in your Nursery works very hard to make things fun and enjoyable for you. It is run extremely well so you never get bored. It is a lot of work for your headteacher and her deputy headteacher and so I have asked that they share out what they do a bit more, especially in the red and yellow rooms.

I hope you continue to have a lovely time. You are lucky to go to such a very special place.