

# Southway Early Childhood Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109416
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bedford Borough
<b>Inspection number</b>	324956
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jackie Cousins

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	89
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Chrissie Greetham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sanchia Lyon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 July 2006
<b>School address</b>	Amphill Road Bedford Bedfordshire MK42 9HE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 266520
<b>Fax number</b>	01234 212016

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well do centre leaders monitor children's progress, especially boys, in knowledge and understanding of the world?
- are care, guidance, support and children's personal development, including the use of children's targets and feedback good?
- how effectively is music used to develop children's musical and auditory skills?
- how well is the centre's leadership developing opportunities for literacy inside and outside the learning areas and children's involvement in the community?

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, the senior teacher, staff, children, the chair of the governing body and governors, observations of teaching and learning, displays and photographs, as well as an analysis of the centre's data on standards, progress and parents' questionnaires.

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average nursery school and early childhood centre. Half of the children are from White British backgrounds and the other half are from minority ethnic groups. An above average proportion of children are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in speech and language, communication, social and emotional development, is typical of that found nationally. One fifth of the children are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. A significant proportion of children join or leave the school part way through the taught year. Children develop their skills in four main areas, with four smaller spaces used as key group areas, and a large outside area with two all-weather covers. Children can attend a breakfast club from 08.00 until 09.00 and an after school from 15.30 till 16.30 during term times. A holiday club runs 08.30 to 12.30 during most school holidays, except for a couple of weeks in the summer holidays.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Southway Early Childhood Centre is a good place to learn. It has a few outstanding features. Children's personal development is outstanding. This is a terrific strength of the centre. The children get a superb start to their education. Whether they start at the beginning or part way through the taught year, children of all abilities and backgrounds settle successfully into nursery school and centre life. This is because all staff give a dedicated and good level of care, support and welfare. A good partnership is in place between the centre's leaders, staff, other agencies and parents. One parent summed it up by saying, 'In the short time my child has attended she has thrived and gained confidence in herself and in the teaching staff. I am always kept updated about any issues that arise and staff are all very friendly and approachable and have a good relationship with children and parents.' Staff are very accessible at the beginning and end of the day, which enables parents to discuss concerns unreservedly and gain guidance. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their child enjoyed their time at the nursery school and centre and that they felt safe and well cared for.

Children gain excellent enjoyment from the many rich and varied activities set up for them. Just by watching them for a short time, it is clear how much fun and learning is going on. Staff develop children's skills thoughtfully in topics that cover many areas of learning at one time. Children undertake exciting experiences, linked to the seasons of the year. For example, in the autumn, children learn about fruits and make jam. Good opportunities are planned for most areas of learning except music. This means that children do not always successfully develop their musical skills in a variety of ways throughout the week. Children's language development is given a high priority and staff spend a considerable amount of time talking to children and extending their use of vocabulary. Children who speak English as an additional language achieve well because they are supported successfully. Bilingual staff allow children to make good progress and deeply increase their access to all aspects of centre life. Effective support for those children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to make good progress. A wide range of visitors comprehensively develops children's understanding, of British and other cultures. For example, children learn about how the fire brigade keep us safe, when they talk to fire officers and study a fire engine. Children are well prepared for the next stage of education because their independence and social skills are greatly developed and they make good progress in literacy and numeracy. Staff ensure that children move effortlessly to primary education by helping them to attend a few sessions at the lower schools in the term before they transfer.

Developing children's healthy lifestyles is a high priority for the centre's leadership. Consequently, the children are encouraged exceptionally well to eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise. Each week, they enjoy learning to cook. They are also keen to make use of the outside areas to extend their learning. Discussion times enable children to learn extremely well about how to keep themselves safe inside and outside the centre. Safeguarding procedures meet all requirements. The children are also kept safe when they use information and communication technology. Children's personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They learn to reflect on their own and others' feelings with exceptional sensitivity, because staff are responsive to how important children's well-being is to their learning and monitor this extremely carefully. Those whose well-being is a concern are supported carefully. Children's moral development is promoted excellently through discussion with staff and so they learn the importance of sharing with others. Attendance is good and children have very

positive attitudes to learning. They behave well because staff and leaders manage them sympathetically but firmly.

Ensuring children make good progress every year is very important to centre leaders. The 2009 assessments, made at Easter, show that children made good progress from low starting points on entry to the centre. Standards are slightly below expectations by the end of the Nursery year. They are slightly above expectations in social development, but are below expectations in linking sounds and letters and in calculation. Standards are broadly in line with expectations by the end of the Nursery year in knowledge and understanding of the world. Attainment of different groups, including that of boys and girls, is carefully monitored. Boys' attainment is lower than that of girls but they make good progress from their starting points. One of the reasons for the centre's success is the careful way staff use assessment to meet children's needs. Over the last few years children achieved well, including those from minority ethnic groups, because assessment is used efficiently to support learning. Regular meetings are held between senior leaders and staff to determine how to extend more able children. Thorough discussions about children who seem to be underachieving take place to establish what extra support would be valuable. Senior leaders are beginning to evaluate rigorously the amount of value added to children's learning.

Children achieve well in their learning because they receive effective teaching. Their key skills develop successfully because staff explain knowledgably how to organise activities. Strong aspects of teaching include the thoughtful use of questioning so that children learn to think deeply about what they are learning. In good sessions, expert questioning ensures children develop their listening skills in a wide variety of ways. Staff have high expectations of children. In an outstanding session, children worked extremely imaginatively to act out a hunt for bears, because the member of staff used resources exceptionally creatively. On a day-to-day basis, staff use assessment well. They spend a considerable amount of time getting to know the children and assessment is on-going. Staff raise children's self-esteem with positive comments to encourage them. Occasionally, children are not totally clear about what their next steps will be in the key areas of linking sounds and letters and calculation. This is because staff do not always give each child detailed feedback on what has been attained., Children are not always involved in reflecting on their successes and areas for improvement at the end of sessions.

Good leadership and management have brought about considerable improvements since the last inspection. A significant development is that children are looked after in smaller groups with a key worker being responsible for each child's progress. Parents are now more successfully involved in setting targets for their child's development. Consequently, the centre is in a good position to continue to improve. The headteacher and the senior teacher drive improvement well. Self-evaluation is accurate and rigorous. Leaders and staff are always looking for ways to improve. The centre's development plan explains successfully how the planning and resources for mathematical learning will be improved in the future. Equality of opportunity for the children is promoted appropriately. Each child is treated as a unique individual and any barriers to learning are identified quickly and staff work efficiently to break them down. The different approaches and areas of learning are managed effectively.

The centre's leaders work well to unite the community. Many children take part in events, such as raising money for those less fortunate than themselves. They have a good understanding of the different challenges faced by people who grow plants in various parts of the world. The children celebrate various festivals. For example, they celebrated Diwali by dressing up in Indian clothes and cooking appropriate foods. Children learn thoughtfully about global issues by recycling materials and composting them. The centre has evaluated its work with the community

and plans to develop this further. For example, it plans to enhance children's awareness of how to sustain the world successfully. Governance is good and governors work well with staff, parents and the community. They consistently question and challenge the centre's performance.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that children understand more effectively how to improve their work so that standards in linking sounds and letters and calculation rise.
- Enhance opportunities for children to develop their musical skills so that they achieve even more successfully.

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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

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do children in the EYFS achieve?</b>	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/or disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children?</b>	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	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

<b>How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?</b>	2
<b>How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?</b>	2



## Leadership and management

<b>How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?</b>	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

22 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Southway Early Childhood Centre, Bedford, MK42 9HE

Thank you for helping me to find out about your childhood centre. I enjoyed watching sessions and talking to some of you. You attend a happy and friendly childhood centre. Good things about your childhood centre include:

- you make good progress in your work
- you concentrate and behave well in sessions
- you really enjoy all the things you do at the centre
- your headteacher and staff have good ideas about ways to improve the centre
- teaching is good and the staff work hard to make sessions interesting
- a good partnership is in place between the centre, your parents and others
- staff care for you well and listen to you thoughtfully.

I have asked your childhood centre to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are to:

- make sure that you understand more clearly how to improve your work so that standards in linking sounds and letters and calculation rise.
- improve opportunities for you to develop your musical skills, so that you achieve even more successfully.

Keep listening carefully to staff comments, come in regularly and enjoy all the super things you are learning at Southway Early Childhood Centre.

Wishing you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Jackie Cousins