

Hart Hill Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109418
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	324957
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bill Holes
Headteacher	Mrs Anthea Saunders
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2006
School address	Whitcroft Road Luton Bedfordshire LU2 0JS
Telephone number	01582 731701
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large nursery school. About half of the children are from White British families with the remainder coming from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, including Portuguese, Latvian, Albanian and Romanian. Of these, about one third are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is higher than in most schools. There are 16 places reserved for children who are referred to the nursery by the local authority and who have severe and complex learning difficulties. The attainment on entry of most children is often well below the levels expected.

The nursery became a designated Children's Centre in October 2007, allowing the governing body to offer extensive services for children and families from the local community. These include a breakfast and tea club, wraparound and holiday care with children being walked to and from the local infant and junior schools to attend. There is a weekly Toddler Group, a weekly baby PEEPS and a Pram to Primary parenting skills session. These take place in the large family room which has its own secure outdoor play area. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes, Family Art and baby massage sessions are also held. 'Special Harts' is a support group for families of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and 'Asparagus Harts' supports parents of children with Aspergers Syndrome. Child minders and foster carers hold meetings here.

Provision is made for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage age group for two-year-olds in 'Little Harts' which is self-contained with its own large classroom and other facilities, including an extensive secure outdoor area. From here children move into the nursery, which comprises three large, themed classroom bases, a library, a music and information and communication technology base and a very extensive secure outdoor area. This includes a woodland walk, an allotment and an adventure zone.

The school has achieved the Under Five's Healthy Eating Award and is working towards the Investor in Families Award. From September 2008 the setting has offered 15 hours fully flexible provision as part of the Luton Pathfinder Project.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Hart Hill Nursery School makes outstanding provision for children's welfare and for their learning and development. As a result, children's achievement and their personal development are outstanding. Children make exceptional progress from very low starting points so that they not only catch up with most children of their age but, by the time they leave the nursery, they often exceeded the levels of knowledge and skills expected of them.

Hart Hill was judged to be outstanding at the time of the last inspection, with an outstanding capacity to continue to improve. This has proved to be correct, with the nursery going from strength to strength. Exceptional leadership and management at all levels, outstanding governance and strong partnerships with parents have all ensured that the quality of the integrated and extended childcare provided in the nursery has continued to be high. Leaders employ very effective systems to monitor and evaluate their work and to ensure that everyone continues to share high expectations for children's success. Everyone shares an understanding of the school's strengths and the response to the need for improvement is swift. For example, close monitoring revealed that progress in children's calculation skills and in their ability to link sounds and letters was relatively slower than in other areas. Decisive action has already resulted in improvements in children's progress in calculation. The next identified task is to develop strategies to improve children's ability to link sounds and letters. Nevertheless, right across the nursery and in the care provision, all children make significant gains in their learning. This is particularly so for those children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are in the early stages of learning English. Importantly, the children themselves are prepared exceptionally well to play their full part in their learning from the first moment they join the setting. High levels of independence and curiosity are promoted so that children respond to challenges enthusiastically. In turn, this contributes significantly to the rapid progress that they make.

Children's enthusiasm and exceptional levels of enjoyment are due in no small part to the inspirational learning opportunities that they are offered, both indoors and outdoors. This is also reflected in outstanding levels of attendance. An array of exciting and challenging activities are planned carefully to ensure that each child takes full advantage of all that the setting has to offer. These learning opportunities are taught by exceptionally skilled practitioners, including teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants. Specialists in early years education, special educational needs and in teaching English as an additional language also make a huge contribution to meeting children's needs. Everyone plays their part in ensuring that children feel safe, valued and well cared for. The view of the majority of parents was summed up well by one who volunteered: 'I would like to offer commendations to the school in all areas. Since starting at Hart Hill, my child has continued to develop with leaps and bounds. I find the teaching and the monitoring of my child's development has been great. The whole staff team has been of a high standard and has been key to making us, as parents, feel secure in the knowledge that our child is safe and well cared for.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop systematic strategies to quicken the progress children make in their ability to hear sounds in language and to link sounds and letters.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

When they start at the nursery, children often have low levels of knowledge and skills. Their problem-solving, reasoning, number and calculation skills are particularly low. Similarly, aspects of their communication, language and literacy skills, such as their ability to link sounds and letters, are very low and this limits their early reading and writing skills. By the time they leave the nursery, the levels children reach are often above those expected. For example, their personal, social and emotional development, their use of numbers for labels, their knowledge and understanding of the world and their physical and creative development are consistently above those expected, representing exceptional progress. Progress is at least good in acquiring language for communication and thinking. Progress is now quickening in acquiring calculation skills. This is in response to the increased opportunities for children to solve problems with hands-on and practical activities. Levels of knowledge and skills are at least as expected in communication, language and literacy. However, leaders have identified that relatively slower progress is made by children in their ability to link sounds and letters, and to build on this acquired knowledge and skill as beginning readers and writers.

Children who are in the early stages of acquiring English as an additional language achieve at least as well as their peers in all areas because they receive outstanding support. Similarly, provision is highly successful in addressing the differences between girls' and boys' attainment so that, by the time they leave the nursery, there is little discernable difference. A high level of specialist professional training for staff ensures that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, no matter how severe or complex, also make exceptional progress toward their personal targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Early on, children are taught to understand their feelings and to show respect. As a result, they develop a clear understanding of right and wrong and their behaviour is exemplary. This is because of the strong moral code which is consistently reinforced by all adults. Hence, aspects such as inclusion and equality are second nature to all. Adults are excellent role models in the high expectations they have for the children in their care.

Children develop a remarkable understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. For example, they can talk about road safety and 'stranger danger' and they use tools and move around the setting extremely responsibly. They love to be active and to eat healthily, often enjoying the produce they have grown on their own allotment. They demonstrate their love of physical activity through their obvious joy when using the extensive outdoor facilities and can often be seen and heard to challenge themselves to 'climb higher' and 'jump further'.

Children make an excellent contribution to the community. High levels of independence are promoted, either through routines of hygiene or in children directing their own learning. The way children get out, return and look after the resources in the setting is admirable. The sweeping up of the sand around the sandpit is as integral a part of the activity as is excavating and building with the diggers. They instinctively go to help and comfort each other when they hurt themselves or in the self-service cafe, when a full jug of water requires four hands rather than two. They co-operate extremely well. Indeed, across the setting there are no barriers of

a social, economic, gender or racial nature and, where words do not suffice, gestures and Makaton are used comfortably. Thus, these excellent personal skills and strong academic development prepare children extremely well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 1

Adults promote children's learning exceptionally well. Teaching and learning are outstanding across all stages of the nursery's provision. Trusting relationships encourage children to be confident and secure and to develop the tenacity to see things through. Adults demonstrate an exceptional understanding of how young children develop and of the framework for learning. As a result, they respond instantly to opportunities, whilst children are at play, to further extend their learning, for example by asking open and challenging questions. They successfully model language in order to extend children's speaking and listening skills. The majority are also highly skilled at knowing when to stand back and let children experiment and put into practice what they have learned. The excellent management of staff teams and the well-ordered environment help ensure that sessions flow, with not a moment being wasted. Planning is undertaken thoroughly and is based on the detailed knowledge of children's needs, progress and interests. Adults regularly make and share with one another their skillful observations of children. These develop into records or 'learning journey' booklets, which parents are encouraged to take home and add to. All adults are extremely skilled in ensuring the needs of everyone, no matter how severe or complex, are met and that all are fully included in everything that the setting has to offer.

Children are offered an outstanding curriculum. Programmes are extremely well organised and planned and a delightful learning environment has been created, both indoors and outdoors, for all ages. Together, these result in children's exceptional enjoyment and the high level of appreciation expressed by parents and carers. Activities are play based and planned to enable children to explore and experiment, with the right balance of adult-led and child-initiated opportunities. Themed areas and topics allow children to revisit and reinforce their learning in different ways. All the outdoor areas present stunning examples of extremely well thought out provision to meet every possible need and interest. They include natural and man-made environments and places where children can be active or quiet. Children are challenged to experiment with different textures and levels. Physical disability is not a barrier as children can be seen, supported by adults, climbing ropes alongside their peers, bravely and successfully extending their physical skills and pushing back perceived boundaries. Similarly, horizons are broadened by a cleverly designed nature walk and look out point which extends the children's view beyond their immediate community, across the valley to the city and the world beyond which they are encouraged to think and learn about.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 1

Adults work in harmony to ensure children's welfare is promoted outstandingly well. Carefully devised policies, rigorously applied practice and highly trained and skilled staff ensure that, right from Baby PEEPS, through Toddlers, Little Harts, wraparound care, and nursery, provision for welfare is of the highest quality. Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements.

An excellent focus on inclusion involves the use of highly skilled and specialist practitioners, who provide outstandingly well for children with what are often severe and complex learning difficulties. Similarly, adults make exceptional provision for children who learn English as an additional language. Individualised programmes are carefully devised and taught, ensuring that these children make outstanding progress. The progress of all children is monitored and evaluated extremely closely. The key worker system is well established and adds considerably to the promotion of welfare and academic guidance. Each individual child is known very well and children who are at risk are identified swiftly so that no-one slips through the net. Close relationships and good communication are formed between adults, children and their families, ensuring the active involvement of parents and carers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. The headteacher plays an exemplary part in giving a clear strategic steer and ensuring the common vision and high aspirations of all. She is an outstanding role model to the team, all of whom share a passion for high quality early years education and childcare provision. The team comprises many able, knowledgeable and often highly specialist practitioners who complement each other admirably. Expertise is shared so that staff are mentored and trained very effectively to fulfil a range of roles. Furthermore, future leaders are being successfully developed and capacity for further improvement remains outstanding. Considerable strengths are to be found in the leadership and management of provision for special educational needs, support for those children gaining early English skills and in the care of all children. Self-evaluation is accurate and leads to focused plans for improvement. Examples of how successful these have been can be seen in improvements to the outdoor areas, further extended care provision and provision for information and communication technology. It is not surprising that parents value the work of the setting highly. Many come to help and stay to work, developing their skills and gaining qualifications along the way. This is just one of many examples of the outstanding contribution which is made to community cohesion. Leaders carefully plan and evaluate provision, which contributes exceptionally well to harmony and improved life chances for children and their families, both within the setting and far beyond.

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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	1
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**

23 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Hart Hill Nursery School, Luton, LU2 0JS

Thank you for being so nice to us when we came to visit you and for helping us to find out so much about your nursery. It was wonderful to see you all playing so happily and nicely together. It was also good to see that you work very hard indeed and that you have so much fun doing so, but that you are having so much fun that you don't even notice!

I am writing to you to tell you what we found out. We agree with you and your parents that your nursery is wonderful! We have judged it to be outstanding in every way. That is because Mrs Saunders and everyone who works at Hart Hill looks after you so very carefully and helps to make sure you are happy, safe and very well looked after. You learn to be very good at doing lots of things for yourselves and we saw this as you helped yourselves to drinks and snacks and sensibly put on and took off your coats without any help. You also learn to be kind, to look after each other and to behave extremely well. You learn about how to keep healthy and safe, especially in your wonderful outdoor area and garden. Here you can run, jump, roll, cycle and climb, solve problems and even grow your own vegetables to eat. You do very well at nursery and often much better than children in most nursery schools. That is because the adults all keep a very close eye on how well you are doing. They are brilliant at planning exciting things for each of you to do which will help you all to keep doing as well as you can. Mrs Saunders, the governors and everyone at the nursery are always looking for ways to make it even better for you. We agree with them that the next thing to do is to find ways to help you listen even more carefully to sounds and then for you to be able to match sounds to letters so that you become even better readers and writers.

We are sure that Mrs Saunders and all the adults will carry on working hard to do their best for you. You have an important job to do too by listening carefully and joining in and trying your best with everything at Hart Hill Nursery.

We would like to wish you good luck and happiness for the future.

Joanne Harvey

Lead inspector