

Ripley Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112478
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325610
Inspection date	5 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Sue Hall

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	147
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Geoff Carlile
Headteacher	Mrs Pat Astill
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2006
School address	Sandham Lane Ripley Derbyshire DE5 3HE
Telephone number	01773 745014
Fax number	

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the nursery and investigated the following issues: whether different groups of children achieve equally well, if assessment procedures are effective in tracking the progress made, and whether the monitoring of the work of the school is rigorous enough to identify areas for further improvement. Evidence was gathered from observations of parts of lessons and discussions with the headteacher, staff, governors and children. Inspectors also scrutinised the inspection questionnaire for parents, school documentation, photographic evidence and a sample of the children's work.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average nursery school which admits children from Ripley and the surrounding area, including several local villages in mid-Derbyshire. Almost all of the children are from White British backgrounds and only a very small number speak English as an additional language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than usually seen, particularly in the area of speech, language and communication. The children work within one of the two main groups and use a wide range of different areas indoors and outside. The school holds Basic Skills, Healthy Schools and a Bronze Eco awards.

Provision for children under three years old was opened on the school site earlier this year and supports vulnerable children and families in the area. The nursery also provides onsite childcare that is not managed by the governing body. These two additional elements of provision were inspected and reported upon separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ripley Nursery continues to provide an outstanding quality of education and care for the children of the area. This is because the headteacher and staff work enthusiastically and closely together to provide an excellent curriculum. This combines an imaginative range of practical activities that develop basic skills in a fun way, which motivates the children to try hard. Parents are generally very pleased with the quality of care and education offered as summarised by one who notes, 'The feeling of leaving your child in such a safe environment in which they can blossom and grow has been life changing for my family... I hold Ripley Nursery responsible for the fantastic start she was given.'

Children enter the nursery with skills, knowledge and understanding that, whilst widely varied, are often below and sometimes well below the expectations for their age. Many children are initially very quiet and have limited confidence and restricted language. Their knowledge and understanding of the world is narrow and they have little experience beyond their home environment. Their creative skills and imaginative play are also limited by their lack of confidence and ability to express themselves. However, their physical skills are often better and many use and control outdoor play equipment quite well. Children rapidly develop much more confidence and are willing to try new activities because the staff give them lots of support and encouragement. This leads to all groups of children making huge gains in their learning, particularly in their social development and in their ability to communicate with others. As they develop these basic skills and self-confidence, they make progress in all areas of their learning and personal development and meet the challenging targets set for them. While initially girls often do better in developing communication skills, including early reading and writing, boys do slightly better in their mathematical development but with little overall difference and achievement is excellent overall. Vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties make excellent progress. When they leave the nursery, most children meet the expectations for their age and many exceed these targets in some areas of their learning and development. This equips the children very well for their future.

The personal development of the children is outstanding and they really enjoy their time in nursery. The staff do much to help children develop healthy lifestyles as seen in their enjoyment of a wide range of fresh fruits, milk and water. There are also excellent opportunities for children to develop an active lifestyle. This includes numerous activities using the excellent outdoor play facilities which, with large verandas and waterproof clothing for all, ensure regular exercise and fun. Children learn how to keep themselves safe and develop an understanding of how their behaviour impacts on the safety of others when playing on wheeled toys.

The nursery is particularly effective in helping children develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Children learn much from stories and discussions so that they develop a greater understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Because there is a large number of staff who set clear and consistent boundaries for behaviour, children learn to develop appropriate social skills. This results in behaviour that is usually excellent, with one parent noting, 'I have seen a noticeable change in my child's ability and behaviour.' The children have excellent opportunities to make a positive contribution to their nursery and local community. Their knowledge of the wider world is ever widening, especially as a result of opportunities to venture out from school, such as the Forest Schools project. Attendance is good.

The learning and development of the children is outstanding because of the excellent quality of teaching and learning. All staff share a real enthusiasm for working with young children. This is seen in the imaginative range of activities provided in the hugely stimulating environment both indoors and outside. Staff plan carefully to meet the needs of different groups, including those identified as gifted and talented and others with learning difficulties. The large staff team are all involved in planning activities and have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and of the children. Staff ask a good range of questions to encourage children to develop their vocabulary and there are lots of opportunities to develop early reading and writing skills. The curriculum is outstanding and a key strength of the school's success, including the Forest Schools work. Activities all contain a practical element where children join in either by following instructions or by finding things out. This is epitomised in mathematical games where children search for number cards hidden around the outside area and have to perform the given number of actions. There are detailed discussions when potting up a wide range of plants that will subsequently be grown in the nursery garden. Key to the progress made is that children develop the confidence and skills to carry out investigations and solve problems.

The welfare of the children is promoted in an outstanding manner. The pastoral support for children and their families is excellent and much valued by carers. One parent summarised the response of the staff to her child's needs by noting, 'The whole staff have embraced simple sign language... the communication between all staff, myself and professionals has been excellent and I could not have hoped for a better educational placement.' The nursery has developed excellent links with an extensive range of agencies. Staff work very closely with the new provision for under three's and local infant schools to ensure continuity of care for all. Checks are made that ensure children are safeguarded, although there are minor concerns about the storage of equipment. Teachers and support staff track the progress children make very carefully and use this information to provide activities that meet the needs of different abilities. Staff are aware, however, that some assessment routines still need improvement to ensure that the small steps of progress are noted and acted upon.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Key to the continuing success of Ripley Nursery is the skill and enthusiasm of the headteacher. This ensures that the nursery continues to move forward and does not become complacent. Staff work exceptionally well as a team and are questioning of everything they do. Self-assessment is accurate and well considered. This ensures there is excellent capacity to continue to improve. The school works very effectively to promote community cohesion, working with local groups and developing wider links, including with New Zealand as noted in the development of 'My personal story' records of progress. There is an excellent range of resources and every inch of the school site is used to maximum effect. Governors are very well informed by the headteacher and some governors have regular contact with the school. However, with a standard number of formal meetings and a limited number of focused visits by governors, it is difficult for them to develop their role as critical friends of the school and be involved in development planning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that governors are well informed at first hand of provision in the nursery and are therefore able to act as a critical friend and involve themselves in school development planning.

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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	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**

6 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Ripley Nursery School, Ripley, DE5 3HE

Thank you very much for looking after us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing how much you enjoy your time in nursery. We think your school is outstanding - well done everyone!

These are some of the best things we found.

- There are many very exciting things for you to do and find out about.
- The staff make really good use of every part of the school and grounds and there are excellent resources for you to use.
- Mrs Astill does a great job of leading the staff team so everyone is really enthusiastic about working with you.
- You make lots and lots of progress in everything that you do and really enjoy your time in nursery.
- All the staff look after you and your families really well so that you can learn and be happy.

To help things to get even better we have asked that:

- the governors (who help the staff to decide how to run the school) find out more what happens in the nursery so that they can help plan for the future.

To help things to improve even further please continue to try really hard in everything you do so that you make more and more progress as you get older.

Yours faithfully

Sue Hall

Lead inspector