

Ham Drive Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113051
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	325745
Inspection date	28 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Huard

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	0–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	105
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Green
Headteacher	Sue Bates
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2006
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ham Drive Ham Plymouth PL2 2NJ
Telephone number	01752 366389
Fax number	01752 366813

Age group	0–4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the success of strategies to improve children's communication skills
- the quality of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly those in the assessment centre
- the extent to which governors fulfil their monitoring role.

Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation and assessment information; observation of the school at work; and discussions with staff, parents, representatives of other agencies with whom the school works and governors. Parental questionnaires were analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, are not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Ham Drive Nursery School is located in an area of social and economic disadvantage. Children who attend are from a diverse range of backgrounds but are mainly of White British heritage. There is a 10 place assessment centre for children with a diverse range of severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and although some move on to special schools many complete their nursery education at Ham Drive. At present the school has a particularly high proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school shares some facilities with a local children's centre which provides sessions for mothers and toddlers as well as parenting classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ham Drive Nursery School makes outstanding provision for all the children who attend and gives them an excellent start to their education. The main reasons for its success are the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the exceptional commitment and dedication of the whole staff. The school recognises every child as an individual and ensures that their unique needs are met. This means that the support, care and guidance provided for the children is of very high quality. The nursery has extremely high expectations for children, their families and the local community. Staff have been deployed with great expertise so that they are able to support children and help them meet the challenges provided for them. Parents are totally supportive of the nursery; the view of one, 'I have nothing but praise for Ham Drive Nursery and its wonderful staff', was echoed by many. In particular, parents appreciate that 'the staff are not just there for the children but parents too, they make you feel very welcome'.

Most children begin at the nursery with very limited skills. By the time they leave many are at the levels expected for their age. An excellent induction programme is in place. This means that each child has a very well planned and happy start to his or her education. Every child is valued and, because they quickly come to feel safe and secure, they flourish in the stimulating and exciting atmosphere. Parents value the support they receive and excellent relationships are quickly established. Because the school works closely with the children's centre, parents get to know the school and its expectations quickly through a range of parenting and therapy classes.

Babies and toddlers learn confidently. Key workers get to know the children and their families really well in order to fully understand the children's needs. There are plenty of stimuli to promote learning. Even the youngest children have opportunities to explore and learn to play with others in an atmosphere of fun and harmony. The joy to be gained from a huge cardboard box, and the multiple uses to which it can be put, was a real eye opener for the inspector! Activities are very well planned to enable children to start gaining some measure of independence. The youngest toddlers know to fetch an apron and put it on before indulging in messy activities, although most still need assistance in fastening this. They were spellbound by the sticky mess that can result from mixing flour and water, and fascinated to see that if they got the amount of water and flour right they would finish up with playdough! As the children get older, activities are provided that require longer periods of concentration and guidance. These are a little more structured so that, for example, they learn how to dress themselves suitably for play outside.

The school has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. Because monitoring procedures have been sharpened, the quality of teaching and learning for the children has greatly improved and is now outstanding. The well-planned, stimulating and exciting curriculum supports children's learning exceptionally well. Staff make detailed and useful observations and these are used extremely well to plan the next steps in each child's learning, play and development. As a result, all children can build on what they already know and make excellent progress. There are a significant proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the school, all of whom are exceptionally well provided for. The day starts with differentiated activities for children in small groups. These activities are extremely well matched to individual children's needs and are great fun so that they learn very effectively. Staff use signing and non-verbal communication when it is appropriate, and these ensure that the needs of every single child are effectively met. The judicious use of praise and encouragement ensures

that children understand that their efforts are valued and even small steps are celebrated. These sharply focused activities in small group's mean that children make significant progress in all areas of their learning.

Children have the benefit of learning in a bright, stimulating atmosphere which is enlivened by displays of their own work. Very good use is made of the outdoor space and the provision of a small climbing wall and climbing apparatus gives children excellent opportunities to develop their physical skills. However, the larger paved area and its surrounds give the impression of being rather tired and shabby. The school is aware of this and there are plans for improvement. Although there is an excellent range of activities for the children, the play surface is very uneven; this means that children can occasionally trip over, playing with wheeled toys is limited and water collects in large puddles when it rains.

The children love coming to school and this is evident in their happy smiling faces. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding. Children are taught about the rudiments of healthy eating and this is reinforced by the healthy snacks that are provided for them. They learn how to share and take turns and their behaviour is excellent. They listen exceptionally well for their age and become confident learners. The wide range of toys and activities available means that children are given opportunities to choose for themselves what they want to do thus developing their independence. The school is very conscious that the children's experiences of other cultures are limited. As a result, the promotion of community cohesion, which is good, has been identified as a priority for further development. The school has established links with a school in Birmingham where staff have visited and children have exchanged cards and presents. Parents and carers are delighted with the school. One parent commented: 'I feel very comfortable talking to the staff and I know they will listen to my views.' They think that staff 'really care for all the children', and, as one said, 'the children are their priority'. This last point is very evident. Because the care and welfare of the children are top priorities the children blossom. There is a systematic and rigorous approach to safeguarding which protects children and reassures parents. Adults are particularly vigilant in helping children to learn how to keep themselves safe and the quality of supervision, particularly for outdoor play, is high. The fact that children are safe, secure and happy contributes to their ability to become successful learners. There are outstanding links with a wide range of outside agencies and these provide very high levels of support for children and their parents.

The school's self evaluation was modest in some of its gradings, but totally accurate in assessing its overall effectiveness as outstanding. Self-evaluation is ongoing and the headteacher is always looking to where improvements can be made; the capacity for carrying these through is outstanding. The governors are knowledgeable and supportive, and monitor the nursery effectively, thus enabling it to go from strength to strength. To echo one of the parents, 'All round, a great place'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of the outside paved area and its surrounds to increase the opportunities for children to further develop their physical skills.

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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	2
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	2

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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**

29 April 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Ham Drive Nursery School, Plymouth PL2 2NJ

Thank you for the wonderful day we spent at Ham Drive. We really enjoyed seeing all the exciting things you do. We think that your school is really outstanding and can see why you all enjoy going to school so much. These are some of the things that we thought were excellent:

- You all work really hard, listen very well to your teachers and each other, and you do really well in all your activities.
- The adults all take really good care of you; they look after you all really well so you feel very safe in school.
- You have excellent teachers and helpers who make your learning interesting and fun.
- Those of you who find learning difficult get fantastically good help from the adults in the school.
- Your headteacher and people who help to run the school are making an excellent job of this, which means that you learn all the right things as well as have a really good time.
- Your teachers work really hard with your mums and dads and carers to make sure that your time at school is as happy as it can be and that you learn really well.

The headteacher and staff have many good ideas to make the school even better. We agree with these. We also think that the paved area outside needs replacing so that you can have more fun out there running around and on your wheeled toys. We had a lovely day at your school and really enjoyed seeing you all.

Yours faithfully

Christine Huard Lead inspector