

Etherley Lane Nursery School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 113976 |
| Local Authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 325917 |
| Inspection dates | 22–23 October 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Moira Fitzpatrick |

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

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| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3–4 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 72 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Barbara Little |
| Headteacher | Mrs Leslie Patterson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 March 2006 |
| School address | Hazel Grove Bishop Auckland County Durham DL14 7RF |
| Telephone number | 01388 604835 |
| Fax number | 01388 604835 |

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|--------------------------|--------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average sized Nursery which serves a wide area around Bishop Auckland, which is socially and economically mixed. Children are predominantly from White British heritage groups, with a small number from minority ethnic groups. Overall the development of children when they start the Nursery is broadly typical for their age. The school is piloting extended hours this term so that children are able to access 15 hours of provision each week.

There has been a number of staffing changes since the last inspection. A new headteacher took up post in January 2008 and a new nursery nurse was appointed in the spring term. At the time of inspection half of the teaching staff were unavoidably absent from the school. They were replaced by a supply teacher and an unqualified classroom assistant.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Etherley Lane Nursery makes satisfactory provision for children's learning and this is improving under the leadership of the headteacher. By the end of Nursery, children's development is typical for their age and their achievement is satisfactory. In some areas of learning children make good progress and exceed the expected levels of development. This is shown in their personal, social and emotional development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They make less progress in their communication, language and literacy skills because staff expertise in this area is not as strong and planning does not make clear how these aspects are included in other areas of learning. Parents are very happy with what the Nursery provides. Many praised the arrangements for children to join the school saying their children, 'settled in well' and are, 'very disappointed when it gets to the weekend'. A few expressed concerns at the phased entry, while others have concerns about the early start time in the mornings. The school has acknowledged these concerns and is preparing to consult with parents over these arrangements.

Children's personal development is excellent because they are encouraged to be independent, are secure in their relationships with their key worker and have ready access to learning activities indoors and out. They listen well to their teachers and are keen to show and explain what they have been doing. They look after the Nursery very well and are beginning to take on responsibility for tidying up at the end of sessions. Children feel very safe and secure in this happy environment. This is reflected in their excellent behaviour and in the way they confidently move from one activity to another happily finding out things for themselves.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Where staff expertise is being developed, for example, in using the assessment of children's learning to plan the next steps, it shows signs of improving. Adults lead short focused tasks which develop children's knowledge and understanding well. The development of children's early reading and writing skills is not so well promoted because staff lack the expertise for this. The headteacher has planned staff training for this term to overcome this weakness. The curriculum makes satisfactory provision for children's learning both in and outdoors and parents value the free access, 'My child enjoys the fact that she can go outside every day even if it's raining.' A good range of trips and visits is organised that extends children's knowledge of the world around them. These help children find out more about other cultures and traditions. Children are well cared for. Parents appreciate the link that key workers make between home and school, and are 'very pleased with the nature and level of support given to help my child settle'. Children who have additional needs are well supported and are fully involved in all activities. Parents of such children are very pleased with the support they are given and comment: 'I have every confidence in each and every staff member' and 'I would recommend this school to anyone I know.'

The headteacher has given a good impetus to developing the Nursery. The impact of new initiatives has been slowed by unavoidable staff absence but nevertheless there are clear signs of improvement in assessment procedures, the level of children's personal development and the growing expertise of staff. Weaknesses, for example, in the quality of planning have been identified and the correct priorities set for future developments. The role of key staff has been developed so that they play a fuller part in school improvement. However, monitoring and evaluation responsibilities have not been shared sufficiently through the school. As a result, staff and governors have not been able to play a strong enough role in identifying and promoting

developments. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection and the school has a sound capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve planning for teaching and learning and provide staff with a clear framework that ensures good progression and provision in all areas of learning, especially in communication, language and literacy.
- Increase the school's monitoring and evaluation activities to ensure that staff and governors have good first hand evidence on which to base suggestions for school improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children join the Nursery with a wide range of development, which overall is broadly typical for their age. Each year there are a few children who have language and communication difficulties, for whom the school makes additional provision to help them catch up with their peers. Children's achievement is satisfactory overall. By the time children transfer to the Reception year, their development is about what is expected. Nonetheless, in some areas of learning it exceeds expectations and children have made good progress. For example, children make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their personal, social and emotional development, where many exceed the expectations for their age. Progress in communication, language and literacy is satisfactory, and held back somewhat by a lack of opportunity to learn early reading and writing skills. Mathematical skills are at the expected level by the end of Nursery, although a few children exceed expectations in this area each year. Progress in physical and creative development is satisfactory, with nearly all children reaching the expected level for their age. Some activities seen during inspection indicated that these are areas where learning is accelerating, especially in physical stamina, dexterity and imaginative play because children have plenty of open ended opportunities to discover for themselves what they can do.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development, including their moral and social development, is excellent. Their spiritual and cultural development is good. Nurturing good levels of independence and self-esteem through access to activities that are child-centred and child-led is at the heart of the school's work. Children thoroughly enjoy coming to Nursery. They leave parents or carers happily and quickly find something to absorb their attention in the lively learning environment. They relish the praise that they are given by staff and this helps them develop confidence in their abilities and a strong sense of their own worth. Children are kind to one another because of the excellent example set by all staff and have a well developed sense of right and wrong and fairness. They are learning to take care of their personal hygiene well and know, for example, that when they begin to cook the first job is to wash their hands. They enjoy snack time and know that some foods can only be eaten in small quantities and that bodies need plenty of exercise to stay fit. They need no encouragement to do this and spend much time outdoors in energetic and challenging activities. Children are building firm foundations for their future

learning by developing a broad range of skills and the ability to give and take and collaborate to get jobs done.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some good teaching was seen during inspection, especially where staff had planned a clear focus for learning and were flexible in their response to children's needs. For example, when making flapjacks or creating a scarecrow children's learning was good. Teachers' responses to child initiated learning are not as confident because staff have not had enough training or experience of managing children's learning this way. While there are some individual examples of good support for children's learning, this is not yet happening regularly enough to make their learning consistently good. Planning does not clearly show what the intended learning outcomes are, so staff have not enough guidance for their interventions. Since the start of term all staff have been involved in the assessment of children's learning. This is another area where skills and expertise are being developed. While permanent staff are accurate in their assessments, unavoidable staff absence means that the Nursery is not managing as many assessments for individual children as they normally would. The result is that the benefits of this new initiative have not yet impacted enough on children's learning to ensure that it is good overall.

The curriculum is satisfactory with strengths developing in the provision for child-initiated learning, where there is increasing opportunity for children to investigate and discover for themselves. Adult led activities help move children forward with their key skills by including a focus on mathematics or speaking and listening. Less attention is given to developing early reading and writing skills, but training planned for this term is intended to give staff the expertise to teach letters and sounds in order to promote these areas of learning. Children who have learning, behavioural or medical difficulties are well supported so they are fully involved in all activities with their classmates.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 2

Children are well cared for. They feel safe in this warm, welcoming environment, where each day starts with a secure and happy handover to key workers. Key workers get to know their groups of children and their families well. Parents value the good communication which makes them quickly aware of any difficulties their child may be having. They are very confident that the school would contact them immediately if there was a problem. These good links with parents reassure the children and allow them to feel safe and secure, so that they quickly develop trusting relationships with staff and each other. The school's links with primary schools and the opportunity for children to join the lunch club and extend their school day help to prepare for the transition to the Reception class at the end of the year. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place and meet requirements. Rigorous arrangements are in place for risk assessment, first aid and medical provision. Staff are well aware of individual children's needs and have been trained to administer these.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has set a clear direction for school improvement and has provided good quality professional development for staff to enable them to implement changes. Strong teamwork has developed this school year, despite some staff being temporary, and all staff are supportive of the headteacher's vision for the school. Permanent staff have welcomed their enhanced role in tracking children's learning and developing provision. They willingly take on new ideas and responsibilities and are keen to develop their expertise further. The headteacher's drive to improve learning through good use of assessment information is beginning to pay dividends as staff improve their skills and expertise.

School evaluation is satisfactory. Monitoring and evaluating the school's performance has not been shared enough amongst staff and governors, and this has left the school with an inaccurate picture of some areas of its work. This is improving through regular staff meetings where information about children's progress is shared. Governors are supportive and keen to promote the school but do not have enough first hand knowledge to challenge the school or suggest areas for improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 3 |
| The standards[1] reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| 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? | 3 |
| How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 |

Leadership and management

| | |
|--|-----|
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 |
| 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**

25 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Etherley Lane Nursery School, Durham, DL14 7RF

Thank you for allowing me to join in your activities when I inspected your Nursery the other day. I really enjoyed seeing how well you have all settled and how well you get along. No wonder your teachers and families are so proud of you. Please thank your parents for the replies to the survey. They showed that they like your Nursery as much as you do and are very pleased with how you have settled in.

One of the things that stood out for me is how good you are at finding out things for yourselves. From the minute you came into Nursery you were busy exploring the different activities and soon found something that really interested you. You showed that you are good listeners and like to know what is going on. I really enjoyed your singing and think you have learned some new songs very quickly.

All the adults in your Nursery look after you really well and that is one reason why you are so confident and able to learn. You are also good at copying their kind behaviour and it was very nice to see how kind and caring you are with each other. In a short time at Nursery you have developed some excellent skills such as your independence and how well you can concentrate and get jobs done. I saw some lovely pictures because you had kept going so well to get them finished. You are making steady progress in your learning because teachers plan activities to help you learn in all that you do. You get a great deal out of playing and learning outdoors and know very well how to manage all sorts of equipment.

To help your Nursery to get even better, I have suggested a couple of things your school could do. One is to have more people look at what you are doing and how well you are learning. So you may see a few more adults in the Nursery now and then. The other is to make more careful plans to help you all learn a little faster, especially in your reading and writing skills. I'm sure you will all be happy to help with that because you showed me how much you enjoy listening to and talking about stories during my visit.

I hope you continue to have a lovely time for the rest of the year. My very best wishes to you all.

Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead inspector