

Earlham Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120767
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	327357
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Anna Coyle

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	1–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Sheridan
Headteacher	Mrs Felicity Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2006
School address	Cadge Road Norwich Norfolk NR5 8DB
Telephone number	01603 454271
Fax number	01603 454271

Age group	1–4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is part of Earlham Early Years Centre which provides integrated nursery education and day care for children aged between eighteen months and four years. It also provides for the community through family health and support services and a childminder network. Most children are White British, but there is also a small proportion of children from minority ethnic backgrounds, some of whom learn English as an additional language. The main languages spoken at home are Portuguese, Lithuanian and Polish. Many children have poor vocabulary and very limited personal, social and emotional skills on entry. A significant proportion has learning difficulties and/ or disabilities; their special educational needs include visual and hearing impairment, autism and speech and language difficulties as well as behavioural, social and emotional needs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It provides well managed nursery and day care provision for the children in its care. Children are nurtured carefully in a welcoming and friendly atmosphere in which parents are highly valued as partners in their children's learning. In their responses to the inspection questionnaire, several delighted parents commented on the 'patient, supportive and nurturing staff' and the school's strong links with them.

Children make good progress and achieve well in this positive environment. They enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good behaviour and attitudes to learning. When they first start in the day nursery children's skills and experiences are much lower than those expected for their age, especially in their use of language and aspects of social and emotional development. Children's personal development and well-being are particularly well supported through the school's strong focus on promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a curriculum based on children's 'dispositional' learning. This is firmly rooted in an emphasis on treating every child as a unique individual.

Children's learning and development are good. The staff work very closely together as a strong team of key workers, focusing closely on children's individual needs, and the quality of teaching is good overall. All adults have a good understanding of how young children learn. Their strong focus on research helps them to increase their professional knowledge and develop new ways of working. Procedures for checking and tracking children's progress are well developed and the information gathered is used effectively to target individual support. Staff accurately plan the next steps in children's learning, although the school recognises that greater links can be made between its 'dispositional' curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum by including more precise information in teachers' written planning and assessments. The school also recognises that its use of information and communication technology and open-ended questioning are areas for development. Nonetheless, teachers and nursery nurses give valuable support to all children, particularly those who are vulnerable or who require additional support to help them learn in the sensory room and the much loved 'Ball Pool'.

Pivotal to the school's success are the good leadership and management of the headteacher. She and the senior managers and governors all work together as an effective team to ensure that the school's provision is evaluated regularly so that the school's capacity to improve is good. It has improved well since its last inspection, although the information gained from monitoring the quality of teaching is not used sufficiently to spread good practice across the school. The extensive outdoor area, woodland and vegetable garden are excellent resources that are used daily to encourage children to experience exciting activities such as hunting for mini-beasts, tree climbing, building shelters and exploring natural crafts. Staff make jams and soups from the school's home-grown produce, such as blackcurrants, runner beans, peas and herbs. These are much appreciated by parents, children and the local community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the use of information and communication technology and open-ended questions to help children improve their vocabulary and language skills.
- Extend the links between teachers' planning and assessment for the 'dispositional' curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.
- Make more effective use of the information gained from the monitoring of teaching to spread good practice throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well, even when they have exceptionally low starting points on entry. As a result of well-established links between the nursery and day care provision, children quickly settle into daily routines and make good progress in this purposeful setting. They willingly take part in plenty of integrated activities in the school's 'Rabbit', 'Squirrel', 'Mouse' and 'Hedgehog' rooms. By the time the children reach the end of their time in the Nursery, their skills are still limited, especially in their use of vocabulary and language. Those who find learning hard are very well integrated and supported in this highly inclusive setting to help them make good progress in their learning. Children make the best progress in personal, social, emotional and physical development. The children are able to use toys and equipment confidently and move around the setting in a responsible way. They especially love to be active and this is demonstrated enthusiastically when they play in the outdoor areas where they can be seen climbing to the top of the 'Magic Mountain', jumping in the bubbling stream and running along the textured pathways.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. As soon as they begin, the children are taught how to show respect and understand their feelings. As a result, they begin to develop a good understanding of right and wrong. Adults provide good role models in the expectations they have for children in their care. Behaviour is good because the strong moral code is consistently reinforced by all adults. Consequently, children attend well and are enthusiastic about their learning. They begin to develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. For example, they love to eat the fruit and vegetables they grow in their garden. High levels of independence are promoted through, for example, routines of hygiene, getting dressed or in children directing their own learning. Children are encouraged to get out, use and return resources themselves and this they do carefully. They cooperate well and play happily together and this results in them developing early skills that prepare them soundly for their future learning.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 2

Children's learning and development are promoted well through the good quality teaching and a good curriculum. Programmes are well organised and planned to cover the five elements of the school's 'dispositional' approach to learning: co-operation, rich and flexible communication, playfulness, persistence and curiosity. This underpins the Early Year's Foundation Stage provision both indoors and in the delightful outdoor learning environment. Planning is undertaken effectively by all adults and is based on the detailed knowledge of children's interests, progress and needs, although there is scope for increasing the links between the statutory curriculum and the school's specific 'dispositional' curriculum. Adults regularly make and share observations of children. These, in turn, are developed into records or 'learning stories' that are shared with children and parents. These strong features result in children's real enjoyment of learning and this is supported by the high levels of appreciation amongst parents and carers. Based on

thorough observations, activities are play-based with the right balance of adult-led and child-selected opportunities. Adults focus well on drawing out children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them, although the use of computers and open-ended questioning is underdeveloped. Learning resources are readily available, but some are old and in need of replacement. Regular visits and visitors enrich children's learning effectively.

The Nursery places a high value on outdoor learning through its 'Forest school' programme in which children can build self-esteem and independence by exploring the natural world around them. The cleverly designed outdoor area provides endless opportunities to meet the full range of children's interests and needs. This extensive area includes the nature walk and many natural places for individual, quiet reflection or group activity. Through creative landscaping, children are encouraged to experience and explore different textures and levels. Imaginative planting aids the children's sensory development. Recently, children have danced around the 'living' maypole to the music of a violinist. They have also helped to create a wide range of homes for wild-life; for example, by building a log and stick home for snails.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 2

Adults work closely as a good team to ensure that children's welfare is effectively promoted. Carefully devised policies, reflective practice and well-trained staff ensure that provision for the under-threes, wraparound care and nursery provision for welfare is of good quality. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. The good focus on inclusion involves the use of skilled and specialist practitioners who provide well for children with a range of needs and disabilities. Adults similarly provide well for children who learn English as an additional language or have learning or health needs. Individualised programmes are tailored effectively, ensuring that children make good progress, and this is monitored and evaluated closely. The key worker system is well established and adds to the academic guidance and welfare of the children. Adults have good knowledge of each individual child and those who are at risk are swiftly identified. Good communication and close, trusting relationships between adults, children and their families, ensure supportive involvement of parents and carers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides clear direction for the school and the day care provision. She is well supported by the senior staff. All adults work together well, with individual responsibilities clearly defined and understood by all. The roles of the pedagogy and community leaders and the special educational needs coordinator are well developed and secure systems are firmly in place for them to oversee the school's provision. The school's strong partnerships with local agencies benefit children's learning well. This is because multi-disciplinary professionals who are based in the school liaise closely together to support the medical, social and community needs of the families they serve. The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching regularly, although the information is not analysed or used sufficiently to spread good practice across the school. Self-evaluation is mainly accurate and the school has good capacity for further improvement. The governing body holds the school to account and evaluates the impact of its spending decisions. It is currently reviewing its effective provision for community cohesion, which strongly promotes the inclusiveness of the school and its good links with the local community.

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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?	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

How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
The standards[1] reached by learners	4
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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
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?	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

15 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Earlham Nursery School, Norwich, NR5 8DB

You may remember that we came into your school recently to see how well you were doing. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us. This letter is to let you know what we found out.

- You go to a good Nursery school and day care centre where all the grown-ups take good care of you in the 'Rabbit', 'Squirrel', 'Mouse' and 'Hedgehog' rooms.
- You enjoy coming to school and your behaviour is good.
- You achieve well and make good progress in your learning.
- The teaching is good.
- You have plenty of good opportunities to take part in physical activities in the school's excellent outdoor area, woodland and vegetable garden.
- The headteacher leads and manages the school well.

We have asked the grown-ups to look at how they can make things even better by doing three things.

- Increase the use of computers and questions to help you improve your vocabulary and language skills.
- Ask teachers to link their planning with the checks they make on your progress.
- Check how well teachers teach, and use the information to make teaching even better.

You can help by continuing to enjoy learning and being good children.

Best wishes

Yours faithfully,

Dr Anna Coyle

Lead inspector