

# Allens Croft Children's Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103130
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	336013
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 December 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Carnaghan

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	0–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	170
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs K Jerwood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs L J Brodie
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	0 July 2007
<b>School address</b>	Allens Croft Road Kings Heath Birmingham
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors made seven observations of varying lengths of children's learning, and held meetings with governors, staff and children. They observed the school's work, and looked at the centre's policies, its monitoring evidence, assessment records, safeguarding checks and 35 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the consistency of children's progress and attainment
- the achievement of gifted and talented children.

## Information about the school

Allens Croft Children's Centre offers integrated education and care for children from birth to four years. Its Nursery provides full-time education for children from 3 to 4 years old. The centre offers a wide range of extended services, including before and after-school child care. Just over 50 percent of the children are White British, the others come from a wide range of backgrounds with no one group predominating. About five percent of children are at an early stage of speaking English. Approximately seventeen percent of children have special educational needs and/or disabilities, a little below average, the largest group of these children has speech, language and communication difficulties. The centre shares its premises with many other local professional groups, including those in the National Health Service.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

### Main findings

Allens Croft Children's Centre is exceptional. It has continued to improve and consolidate its work and empowers children, families and the community alike. The headteacher and her team work in close collaboration to meet all children's needs. All staff share a passion for giving children the best possible start in life. The very thorough assessment of children's development ensures that each child receives the support and challenge required to make excellent academic and personal progress. The achievement of all groups of children, including those who are gifted and talented, is outstanding. Whilst they start at the centre with skills and aptitudes that are below those typical for their age, they leave with attainment that is above expectations. However, children's skills in calculation lag slightly behind those in other areas.

Teaching encourages children's independence and well-planned, purposeful activities ensure that they can all be active learners. Regular, accurate assessment of children's work keeps staff and parents very well informed. Prompt, effective actions ensure that any slowing of progress is quickly attended to. Strong support for children with speech, language and communication difficulties is effective in helping them to overcome barriers and to make excellent progress. All staff work as a very proficient team, maintaining a rigorous focus on children's well-being and development. The care given to children is outstanding. Children are secure, confident and very happy, knowing there is always a kind face to turn to if they feel uncertain or distressed.

The excellent curriculum offers a range of fascinating and stimulating learning opportunities. The superb accommodation, inside and out, and outstanding resources help the school to provide a splendid variety of experiences for children to select from. All the required areas of learning are fully covered. The centre's emphasis on creativity and practical activities has been evolved to suit the needs of its children and is most effective in engaging their interest and enthusiasm.

There are significant strengths in the warm relationships the centre cultivates with parents. One typical comment was, 'We feel we can approach staff at any time and discuss any concerns and questions we may have and always get a satisfactory, friendly and personal response. A fantastic nursery all round, one we would highly recommend'.

The inspirational headteacher sets high expectations for staff and children alike. In their striving to live up to her high standards, staff work as a highly effective team and children's confidence and ability grows in leaps and bounds. Morale is very high and all staff strongly believe in what the centre does for its children.

The centre's tireless pursuit of excellence has led to strong and sustained improvement. Sophisticated, accurate analysis of performance has led to the setting and meeting of

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challenging targets. Comprehensive systems for staff professional development that are firmly linked to the centre's priorities for improvement support its quest for further development.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By December 2010, improve children's attainment in calculation by developing staff skills in teaching this area.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

**1**

Children start at the centre at different ages. They come from a mixture of backgrounds and with a wide variety of needs. The very thorough assessment procedures used by the centre provide clear indications of each child's level of development. The centre works at this individual level to get the very best from each child. The pattern of children's starting points indicates that their skills and aptitudes are below those expected for their age, and especially low in calculation.

The outstanding curriculum and teaching ensure children learn very well in the classroom and make excellent progress. Staff adjust what they offer children, so that all follow the correct courses of action to meet their learning and personal needs. Children who have speech, language and communication difficulties are quickly identified. The very effective support they receive means that they make as rapid progress as other children. Looked after children also thrive in this positive atmosphere. By the time children leave the centre, their attainment is higher than expected, with only one variation. Their calculation abilities, whilst above expectations, are a little below those in other areas, because staff are less confident in teaching these skills. The quality of children's progress means that their achievement is outstanding.

Parents emphasise how happy their children are to come to the school. Despite early childhood ailments, attendance is high. Behaviour is excellent and children are allowed to be their ebullient selves by confident, considerate staff. Children's safety is paramount and they quickly develop an excellent understanding of safe routines, like following rules and washing their hands before eating. They exercise keenly and know the importance of eating and drinking properly, supported by good role modelling from all adults.

The centre promotes independence very well and children develop good empathy with others. They make outstanding progress in developing important skills, like literacy and numeracy. Children mix very well across age and ethnic boundaries. The 'children of the week' system ensures they take responsibility for small tasks that support others. The school community is very cohesive and children take part eagerly in special festivals and events. They have a good grasp of right and wrong and develop excellent social skills, respecting others' views and beliefs and showing a very good understanding of the diversity of cultures in Birmingham and across the country.

*These are the grades for children's outcomes*

**Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

**1**

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b>	
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Children's attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of children's learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which children feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Children's behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Children's attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

The centre has excellent systems to assess and record each child's progress. Adults keep careful notes of children's accomplishments as they go through the day. Time is regularly set aside, so staff have time to organise these notes into a continuous record of how children are getting along. This tracking is then compared with what is expected of the child's age range and, if there are any discrepancies, immediate effective action is taken. The centre has refined its criteria for assessment so that staff identify small steps in learning rather than waiting longer periods to see if the next level has been reached. These strengths ensure that no child falls behind, allowing early interventions to be made to boost progress. Photographs and notes of what children have done are displayed in entrance areas and parents take great pleasure in these. The daily diary records for parents their child's significant achievements of the day as well as more practical information, such as how long and when she or he has had a sleep.

Teaching and the curriculum are closely entwined. The plethora of fascinating activities make the large, open, learning area seem like Aladdin's cave. Each zone is meticulously planned to be attractive and to contribute to children's development. For example, a huge mix of shockingly pink paint was used outside for children to have a go at forming letters on a board or on the ground. This was done because staff had determined that it was easier for many children to write with large hand movements as a preliminary to attempting to use fine motor skills to form letters, using pencils and paper. The

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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exemplary accommodation and plentiful, carefully selected resources make a huge contribution to children's progress. Joint curriculum planning with receiving infants' schools eases children's transition into primary education.

Adults relate very well to children. They are alert, encourage learning and make excellent role models. Children are treated with love and respect at all times and, in turn, they learn to treat others properly. Planning of sessions is comprehensive and offers a good balance of teacher-led and child initiated activities. The preparation of the learning environment is meticulous so that learning can proceed apace. Strong monitoring by the centre ensures that teaching has great consistency and a drive to meet learning objectives. However, teachers are less confident and skilled in teaching calculation.

The high ratio of adults to children and the centre's nurturing ethos ensures that all receive the most attentive care. While children's needs and characteristics are well known to all staff, the key worker for each child is the central figure in promoting their care and development. Warm, constructive relationships with parents are much appreciated on both sides and underpin the effective nurturing. Children's safety is a priority. Those with barriers to learning receive particularly effective support. The family support co-ordinator successfully engages with parents who may be experiencing difficulties.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher successfully inspires in all staff a strong sense of purpose and has embedded in the centre a burning ambition to improve. Very effective self-evaluation of all aspects of its work provides the centre with a clear picture of its strengths and areas for development. The rigorous monitoring of teaching ensures consistently high quality planning and delivery of lessons. Planning for the future is focused on the right priorities and is regularly reviewed to ensure that targets are being met. Equality of opportunity for all children lies at the heart of the centre's actions. Incisive monitoring informs all the centre's work and, in consequence, there is no unevenness in the progress and attainment of groups of children.

The governing body is very well-informed about life at the centre, because governors have a variety of effective mechanisms to monitor its activities. Their systematic checks

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on policies and procedures ensure high standards, especially in the safeguarding of children. Governors are very reflective and often innovative. For example, they identified potential pitfalls in the use of the website Facebook early on and quickly enacted a policy that anticipates and prevents any mis-use. They hold the school to account as a matter of course and participate as equal partners in setting priorities for the future.

Parent's engagement in the school is a high priority for governors and centre leaders. The start and end of each day sees the centre flooded with parents who engage with staff in a frank, trusting and friendly fashion. Timetabled meetings during the day bring parents into the centre to talk about their children with key workers. A notice board in the entrance displays parents' comments and questions. The centre's constructive responses to these queries are also displayed. The centre's warmth and openness and the numerous meetings it runs, engage many parents who would otherwise be reluctant to come into a school. This has a significant benefit to their children's development.

The centre's spacious building is host to numerous other agencies, like health care and social services. Staff work seamlessly with fellow professionals on the site and beyond to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and families. These and other partnerships provide benefits that could not be offered otherwise and contribute to the excellent value for money that the centre provides. Links with other agencies also play a significant part in keeping children safe. The way the school safeguards children is immensely thorough and all policies and procedures are kept rigorously up-to-date. All processes are regularly monitored by those responsible, including governors.

The centre has a deep understanding of the nature of the local community. It has evaluated its work to promote community cohesion in depth. Its actions have a very beneficial effect on the local community. For example, the centre provides numerous courses for parents to help to develop their skills and confidence. Children know that the centre is very cohesive, so they feel at home there and their development benefits from this great consistency. The centre provides excellent training opportunities for fellow professionals. Links locally, nationally and across Europe benefit both the wider world and the centre.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>



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<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	1
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	1
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	1

## Views of parents and carers

Parents wrote in glowing terms about the centre. Most had no concerns whatsoever. One comment represents the views of many, 'We love this school, they are so great! Our son has been here for over one year and a half, he's happy and excited to attend every day. He learns a lot!'

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Allens Croft Children's Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 170 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	71	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	80	7	20	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	71	7	20	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	74	8	23	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	77	7	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	71	8	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	71	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	20	57	13	37	2	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	69	9	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	69	10	29	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	66	10	29	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	71	9	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	49	27	49	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its children's needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a child in their learning and development.
Attainment:	in other phases of school, for example primary schools, attainment is the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. However, there is no national average for three- and four-year-olds. Therefore, in inspections of nursery schools, inspectors take account of expectations in the age-related bands of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in nursery sessions and over longer periods of time.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



7 December 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Allens Croft Children's Centre, Birmingham, B14 6RP

It was lovely meeting you when the inspectors visited recently. Thank you for being so friendly and showing us what you were doing. You seemed very happy. This is because Allens Croft is so good. Almost everything about the centre is excellent.

You get on so fantastically because the adults in the centre look after you really well and give you so many interesting things to do. You are very grown up and this shows in your excellent behaviour and how well you work. The headteacher and all the staff do everything that they can to give you lovely days and a great start in life. There is only one thing that needs to be better, this is:

Your calculations skills are a little lower than your other skills and the centre should work to make these better.

Once again, thank you all for being so nice. It was lovely meeting you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector

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