

Hillfields Early Years Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103633
Local Authority	Coventry
Inspection number	336120
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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	0–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brinder Seni
Headteacher	Helen Watson
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 14 lessons and saw five early years practitioners teach. Inspectors held meetings with governors and various members of staff, as well as speaking informally with parents, carers and children. They observed the nursery's work and looked at a range of documentation including lesson planning, assessments of children's progress, planning documents, policies, procedures and records. They took account of 16 responses from staff and 83 questionnaires from parents and carers. Children's opinions were also taken into account.

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

- how well all groups of children achieve from their starting points with particular emphasis on more able children, children who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the effectiveness of staff's use of assessment to ensure that tasks set meet children's needs
- how well the nursery promotes community cohesion.

Information about the school

The centre provides an extensive range of integrated services and day-care facilities for families as well as both full and part-time nursery provision for children aged three and four. There are 38 different languages spoken in the centre. Children come from many different nationalities, the largest identifiable groups being Black British African, Asian British Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi. The area has a high concentration of families who have asylum seeking status. Currently nearly half of the children in the nursery are known to be eligible for free school meals. Almost one third of children have special educational needs and/or disabilities; the nature of needs being speech, language and communication, autism and behavioural difficulties. Over half of the children speak English as an additional language with many at the early stages of learning English. After-school care and other extended services are also provided on the centre's site. These have been inspected separately.

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

This outstanding nursery is a model of racial harmony where the uniqueness of each child is highly valued. 'This nursery has been my life line' said one delighted parent. 'I have become a better parent as a result of all the help I have had,' said another. The nursery is highly valued by parents and carers, who see it as a 'haven of tranquillity' in their often difficult lives.

All groups of children achieve exceptionally well from very low starting points but there are some missed opportunities in activities for more able children to develop early writing and number formation. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language and looked after children make outstanding progress in relation to their prior attainment. On entry to the Reception class, the vast majority of children exceed expectations for their age in all areas of learning other than early writing and number work, where they attain the levels expected for most four-year-olds.

A particular strength of this nursery is the equality of opportunity for all children to access an exceptionally exciting curriculum, especially outdoors. Children are happy and have very positive attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is excellent because they are so engrossed in learning. Excellent relationships with all staff and key workers and outstanding welfare and safeguarding provision enable all children to thrive and flourish in the very secure environment. Closely tailored support, coupled with high quality partnerships with parents and carers, are key features in the nursery's success. The nursery fully deserves the excellent reputation that it has under the excellent leadership and management of the head of centre and deputy head of centre. As one parent said, 'They stop at nothing to help us, we are all valued and are made to feel special.' Rigorous and accurate evaluation, compared against national and international best practice, leads to well considered action planning.

Children love coming to the nursery as demonstrated by the good attendance and punctuality. Excellent progress in personal, social and emotional development helps them become competent, life-long learners.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Adults have exceptionally high expectations of the children. They intervene sensitively and help them overcome any perceived limitations. They are expert at using information from very detailed observations of children to plan interesting activities but, on occasions, miss opportunities to challenge more able children.

The needs of the community, parents, carers and children are fully taken into consideration, resulting in excellent community cohesion. 'We all belong here,' and 'We

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are united through wanting the best for our children' said one delighted parent. Partnerships with outside agencies are exemplary; all parents and carers are offered an excellent package of support, depending on their needs. The governing body are exceptionally supportive and are fully involved in the life of the nursery. Nevertheless, they are not yet fully evaluating the cost effectiveness of their spending decisions because the school development plan does not contain measurable criteria for success. The nursery's track record in maintaining high quality provision and going from strength to strength since the previous inspection demonstrates excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consistently challenge more able children in capitalising on every opportunity to develop early writing and number skills.
- Ensure the governing body measure the cost effectiveness of their spending decisions by evaluating progress against criteria for success in the school development plan.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**1**

Children's work observed during the inspection and the nursery's own data show that all groups of children achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. This is because of the outstanding teaching which ensures that no child is left behind. Excellent progress is made in speaking and listening because of the exciting learning opportunities in outdoor play. Teamwork is outstanding. Children relish opportunities to tackle challenging tasks such as transporting a long length of plastic tubing from one end of the playground to the forest area in order to build a ship. Children get heavily involved in exploring clay, digging for gold and developing movement through dance. Their levels of concentration are so high that they do not have the time to misbehave or fall out with their friends.

Children's knowledge of healthy eating is very good. They know that brown bread is healthier than white bread and that fruit is preferable to sweets. Lunchtimes for children who attend full time are a delight; children follow a balanced diet and join in stimulating conversations with staff. They have considerable knowledge in staying safe and can express their emotions clearly because of the excellent care, guidance and support they receive from all staff. Children are confident and secure in their friendships and learn exceptionally well. This makes an outstanding contribution to their future economic well-being.

Relationships are particularly strong and children know when to ask for help because they trust the adults looking after them. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Children reflect on questions such as 'Where did the jelly from the tadpoles go?' 'How far is it to space?' 'Why does dry sand feel different when water is added to it?' Their high levels of cultural development are fostered through music, dance, storytelling and the sharing of festivals and celebrations from their many

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different backgrounds. As a result, children's participation to their own, national and global community is outstanding, contributing significantly to the racial harmony of the local area.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Children's attainment ¹	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
The extent to which children feel safe	1
Children's behaviour	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Children's attendance ¹	2
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Children's obvious enjoyment in learning and their excellent progress are a result of consistently high quality teaching and a riveting curriculum. Recycling, gardening, and working with artists are just a few ways in which children get involved. Excellent partnerships with artists and universities contribute to continuous self-evaluation. Children are encouraged to have moments of quiet reflection, watching the clouds move and hearing the birds sing. They build rockets to get to the moon and they chase ladybirds in the forest area. This leads to much discussion and problem solving. Teachers and early years workers are always at hand to support and encourage and they have an excellent understanding of how children learn.

Children's progress is tracked carefully and appropriate interventions are put in place,

¹ 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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but there are some missed opportunities in play to develop more able children's letter and number formation skills. All the learning areas are full of well presented exciting resources and displays which stimulate children's interest. Children are very well looked after and are given targets for improvement which are regularly checked.

Parents are seen as true partners in learning and every opportunity is taken not only to share information on their child's progress with them but also to engage them in a whole range of classes from baby massage to adult literacy.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The head of centre and deputy head of centre have created an exceptionally harmonious community by forging excellent links and relationships with other agencies, community representatives, parents and carers. All staff are totally committed to help children rise above the economic and social barriers the community faces by ensuring that children receive the best possible chances of succeeding in later life. Teamwork, a passion for excellence and ambitious target setting ensure that ambition and drive underpin the nursery and centre's facilities in providing the best possible service for the community. Staff feel valued and are given excellent opportunities for continuous professional development. 'You can never get bored here,' said one member of staff.

Equality of opportunity is the driving force behind the nursery's success. All staff tackle any form of discrimination and ensure equality for all. Excellent partnerships with parents, carers, schools and agencies ensure that the right level of support is given early on, which contributes to the outstanding progress made by children. Community cohesion is excellent. The school has forged very strong links with Ghana and children are fully aware that there are children in other countries just like them, yet living in different circumstances. Child protection procedures are particularly robust and all arrangements for safeguarding children from harm are excellent.

The governing body is very supportive and ensures that all statutory requirements are met. Governors have excellent knowledge of the community and are determined to 'place it on the map' as a centre of exemplary racial harmony. While resources are effectively deployed, the governing body are not yet fully aware of the impact their spending has on the outcomes defined in the school development plan.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

There was a good response to the questionnaire. Parents and carers who returned the questionnaires or who spoke with the inspection team were overwhelmingly supportive of the nursery and centre. They appreciate the hard work of all the staff and say that they are made to feel most welcome and that their children are very happy. They say that the head of centre and all staff have been marvellous at helping them obtain any support that they need. Inspectors wholeheartedly agree with these views. A very small minority said that the nursery did not prepare the children adequately for the next steps of learning. Inspectors did not find any evidence to support this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Hillfields Early Years 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 83 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 150 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	83	13	16	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	61	73	22	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	55	66	23	28	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	63	28	34	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	65	24	29	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	60	28	34	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	51	35	42	1	1	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)	42	51	28	34	5	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	58	29	35	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	53	31	37	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	46	36	43	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	49	59	29	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	59	71	20	24	2	2	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



21 June 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Hillfields Early Years Centre, Coventry, CV1 5GR

Thank you for talking with us when we visited your nursery and children's centre. You attend a truly magnificent nursery with fantastic teachers and early years workers, expertly led by your head of centre, whom you all really like. Thank you for letting us see all the fantastic things you do. I was particularly interested in listening to the story of the very hungry caterpillar sitting on a log in your forest. We enjoyed seeing you eat your lunch, have snacks and playing outdoors. My goodness, you are all so busy! Have you finished building the rocket that will take us all into space?

Your behaviour is excellent, you love learning and you are becoming very confident and independent. You have excellent resources such as the wide range of paints, clay and books. All staff teach you very well and have such fantastic relationships with you. We agree with your parents and carers that you are exceptionally well cared for by all adults. Your teachers and early years workers are very special and they help you a lot. We have asked them to give those of you who learn quickly more opportunities to practise writing and counting. You make excellent progress in speaking and listening and in all areas of learning. You have excellent manners and you get on very well with all of your friends. You know about the languages they speak, the food they eat and the places that are special to them. You are particularly good at telling your teachers and early years workers when you are upset or happy because you can describe your feelings accurately.

Your head of centre and all staff never stop thinking about how to make your learning even more exciting. They are doing a remarkable job in looking after you all which is why your learning is excellent. For those of you who are going to new schools we would like to wish you good luck. You are certainly very well prepared for the next stage in your learning. Carry on working hard and enjoying all that the nursery has to offer.

Yours sincerely

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

Lead inspector

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