

# Low Hill Nursery School and Children's Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104278
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	336273
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sheelagh Barnes

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	80
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Councillor Paul Sweet
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Carroll
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 December 2007
<b>School address</b>	Jenks Avenue Low Hill Wolverhampton
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<b>Age group</b>	3–4
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 March 2010
<b>Inspection number</b>	336273

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<b>Registered childcare provision</b>	Low Hill Children's Centre
<b>Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision</b>	72
<b>Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision</b>	Not previously inspected

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the school's work and spent approximately half their time observing learning. Eight teaching sessions were observed in all three teaching areas of both the school and children's centre. Meetings were held with members of staff and a governor. Inspectors observed the school's and children's centre work, and looked at school self-evaluation, development planning, assessment information and a range of policies and records. Twenty-two parental questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- the current progress of children from all ages in mathematical development and the use of information and communication technology
- how effectively assessment has been developed to ensure that it feeds into future planning to address the needs of each child
- how effectively the roles of governors and staff have been developed to monitor the work of the whole school, take the lead in developing initiatives and help to plan the way forward.

## Information about the school

Low Hill Nursery is a smaller than average sized school. While the majority of children are of White British heritage and virtually all speak English as a first language, a significant proportion come from minority ethnic groups, including a small number from Traveller families. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The Children's Centre, with which the school shares a site, is also led and managed by the school's governing body. The headteacher has been in post just under a year, and was acting headteacher at the time of the previous inspection. The school has received the Healthy Schools Award.

**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?**

**2**

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

**2**

## Main findings

Low Hill Nursery provides children with a good start to their education, and its effectiveness is very well supported by the Children's Centre. The links with other agencies and providers are excellent and benefit the children and their families greatly. Children from all groups and of all ages make good progress in the six areas of learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Progress is particularly good in aspects of personal and social development, because of the strong and consistent emphasis placed upon this in both the Nursery and the Children's Centre. There is good provision to ensure that all other aspects of learning are also well promoted. Recently, for example, the Nursery focused on developing children's mathematical skills, to good effect. Currently, the emphasis is on developing communication and language skills and building children's confidence in the use of information and communication technology. Progress in these two aspects of learning is also good.

The routines of both the Nursery and the Children's Centre are focused on the well-being of the children. The rooms are bright, clean and attractive. Resources are well chosen and a careful balance is maintained between well known toys and resources and those which are changed regularly to maintain interest and develop the children's curiosity. Parents and carers are made to feel welcome and this helps establish a warm, welcoming feel at the start of morning and afternoon sessions. While no time is wasted, there is no sense of rush or agitation. As a result, children come in happily, feel safe and secure and are ready to explore and investigate. Behaviour is good and children enjoy their learning. There is an appropriately strong emphasis on healthy lifestyles and children begin to learn the importance of exercise and a healthy diet.

Children have choice of which activities they undertake each day. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities, both indoors and outside in both settings. Staff carefully note how well each child is doing and this is discussed in the Nursery at twice-daily review meetings and recorded in each child's assessment file. The information gathered is used effectively when planning future activities. However, opportunities are more limited for older children to record and justify the choices they make for themselves. They take part in some evaluation which leads into planning of future activities, but this process is not sufficiently rigorous.

Teachers and other staff are now involved in school self-evaluation and monitoring of standards. Governance has also improved since the previous inspection and is now well placed to improve still further. Governors are keen, and visible to staff and families. They have started to take a greater role in holding the school to account. However, they are aware that they are not yet fully involved in monitoring and school self-evaluation. There are firm plans to improve this and training has been arranged to this end. There

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has been a good level of improvement since the previous inspection, due to the determination of the headteacher and cooperation of all staff. There is a good capacity for improvement to continue.

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

- Improve governance by
  - involving governors more actively in self-evaluation and school development planning
  - raising governors' confidence in monitoring the school's systems.
- Increase children's involvement in recording the choices they make and in evaluating how well they have succeeded with tasks, and feed this more clearly into planning for the next day's activities.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

**2**

Children enter the Nursery with standards that are well below those expected for their age. All staff throughout the school and children's centre provide varied and interesting activities to challenge and interest the children and babies, and to help them learn. They make good progress and standards are broadly in line with those expected for their age by the time they transfer to their next school.

The children have good attitudes to learning and develop good levels of concentration as a direct result of the opportunities they are given to choose activities which interest them. Adults take care to ensure that children are dressed appropriately to safely enjoy outdoor activities, such as ensuring that there are enough wellington boots for all. As a result, children are happy, settle well each day and feel safe to explore and investigate. This demonstrates their good spiritual development. Children develop good behaviour and relationships with others as a result of the good quality care and support they receive. Their social and moral development are good. Staff set children a good example so they are confident and polite. They take turns well, such as when waiting for wheeled toys or to share a glue brush. They concentrate and persevere, for example, carefully completing paintings with mud and water. There are good systems to develop children's independence in learning. However, opportunities for them to take responsibility for their own learning, such as recording which activities they plan to try or how they feel they have done, and what they would want to do to extend the activity, are insufficiently systematic.

Staff help children to recognise different number symbols and to look for similarities and differences as they complete puzzles, take the register or sing rhymes. Children are given good opportunities to order, sort, measure and count a variety of objects in their play. They talk about their experiences and some are developing a real love of books and the recognition that print carries meaning. Children often choose to sit and 'read' favourite books to themselves. Development of communication and language skills is particularly good. Children enjoy energetic play and develop agility and control when

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using equipment in the playground that is shared by the Nursery and Children's Centre. The children's creative development is good: they particularly enjoy art activities, singing songs and rhymes and making music. Toddlers, for example, apply glitter to glue-spread paper with studied concentration and pleasure. The children's cultural development is good. They develop an awareness of other cultures, for example, by learning about different cultures' festivals and foods.

*These are the grades for children's outcomes*

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Children's attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of children's learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which children feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Children's behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Children's attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Provision is particularly good in the teaching of personal and social development and early literacy skills. Teaching and assessment are effective in ensuring that children make good gains in their learning. Provision for all six areas of the curriculum is good for children of all ages and from all groups. There are good opportunities for children to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world and creative and physical development through outdoor learning, especially in the Forest School. The outdoor garden area is relatively small but well planned and used effectively on a daily basis.

<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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There are good plans to develop this area further in the forthcoming term.

Good procedures are in place to ensure that sessions run smoothly and that the children are given good care. Children's needs are met well and the provision is effective in promoting inclusive practice. The staff work well together to include all children, and they communicate effectively with parents. They know the children as individuals, fostering good relationships between children and with adults, and engaging children in enjoyable activities. Good extensions to the curriculum include opportunities for football training and Yoga. There are good opportunities for children to learn about the wider world through curricular activities, such as learning about Chinese festivals and foods, and through links with a school in Africa.

Good arrangements are in place to support and care for children and to help them develop and learn. Parents receive good quality and timely advice on how best to support their child's learning. The Nursery and Children's Centre work exceptionally well in partnership with other agencies to meet the needs of children and their families. Parents who responded to the questionnaire were extremely positive about the care and support they and their children receive. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. Vulnerable pupils are helped by careful monitoring and effective work with a range of other agencies, such as speech therapists and educational psychologists. The range of support programmes, together with some skilled work by early years practitioners, help children with specific needs to make good progress. A range of strategies is used to promote good attendance, but this remains a challenge for a minority.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher's ambition and determination have been central to many of the recent significant improvements. She has high expectations of staff, who respond well, and this ensures children are well cared for and make good progress. A commitment and belief that all children can succeed are at the centre of the effective drive to raise standards, promote equality of opportunity and tackle any discrimination. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and effective. Risk assessments are undertaken assiduously and systems to ensure welfare are efficient.

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The school works outstandingly well with partners, particularly the local authority, social services and other local nursery schools whose support has been crucial in improving the quality of provision. Links with the Community Disability Team and the West Midland Traveller Consortium have provided excellent value for money. These links have benefited children and their families in many ways, and such support may not have been otherwise available to the families. Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciative of the many improvements. The school makes a very good contribution to the local community, effectively utilising opportunities such as the production of a story and song CD to develop links further. The school works well to promote community cohesion. However, leaders and managers have not yet systematically analysed and evaluated the impact on its work of more recent links with the wider community and other communities across the globe, such as in Zimbabwe.

The governors are very supportive. They visit the school regularly, meet with parents and evaluate key areas of provision such as the school's work to ensure equality of opportunity and the safeguarding procedures. However, governors rely too heavily on the school to provide and interpret data about how well children are progressing and how the achievements compare to those attained nationally. This, therefore, limits the challenge they provide. The school provides good value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	2
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	2
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	2

**Views of parents and carers**



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Parents are highly positive in their views and support for school. All parents who answered the questionnaire expressed their appreciation for the school's work. A number felt that the many recent positive changes have made the school even better than before. This view is supported by the findings of the inspection.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Low Hill Nursery School 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 22 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 80 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	82	4	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	77	5	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	64	8	36	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	64	8	36	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	13	59	9	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	55	9	41	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	59	80	36	1	5	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)	9	41	10	45	1	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	68	7	32	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	50	10	45	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	64	8	36	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	64	8	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	82	4	18	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.**



4 March 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Low Hill Nursery School, Wolverhampton, WV10 9JN

Thank you for making me so welcome and for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed watching you work and play indoors and outside. You like school and you work hard. You learn about what you need to do to keep healthy and keep safe. You behave well and help each other. It was good to see how well you take turns and share things.

All the adults work hard to make yours a good school. Lots of interesting things are planned and I know you tell your key worker what you plan to do yourselves. You also tell them how well you got on with your activities. I want you to do more of this, and let the adults know what went really well and what would make your learning even better the next day.

Your headteacher and all the staff are working to make your school a better place. They have excellent links with other people who can help you and your families get the most from school. The school governors are working hard as well and have decided to play an even bigger part in helping to check that things are going well. I agree with them that this is a good idea that will help you all even more.

I wish you all the very best and hope that you will help your teachers to make sure that your school continues to get better and better.

Yours sincerely

Sheelagh Barnes

Lead inspector

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