

Abercromby Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104507
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	336322
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Colin Smith

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S King
Headteacher	Mrs Sara Robb
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited seven lessons, involving three teachers and three nursery assistants, and held meetings with governors, staff, and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at assessments and records of children's attainment and progress, curriculum planning, monitoring records, school improvement plans and completed questionnaires from staff. Thirty seven questionnaires returned from parents and carers were analysed.

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

- children's attainment and progress, particularly their language and mathematical development
- the quality of provision and learning, focusing on role play, challenge and adults' intervention
- the use of assessment to measure progress and inform the next steps in planning the extent to which monitoring of the work of the nursery informs self-evaluation and guides improvement planning.

Information about the school

The nursery is average in size. The proportions of children eligible for free school meals and with special educational needs and/or disabilities are broadly average. The character of the intake of children has changed since the previous inspection. Many of the children are from families of overseas students attending the local university, although nursery places are still made available for children requiring additional learning support. Most of the children are of Middle Eastern, African or mixed heritage. Nine different languages are spoken and 70% of the children speak English as an additional language. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made for children aged three to five years. Children enter the nursery in September, January or April each year, as they reach the age of three, and almost all children complete a full year. The headteacher was appointed in January 2009 and a newly qualified teacher appointed in September 2009. The nursery has gained the Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools awards.

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

Abercromby is a good nursery school. Good care, guidance and support ensure that children are safe, happy and secure. Children's individual qualities are nurtured and highly valued by staff. This makes a very positive contribution to children's excellent behaviour, growing independence and sense of responsibility. These qualities underpin their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Parents and carers are highly appreciative of what the school provides. Comments such as, 'Parents want the best for their children and receive the best in this nursery,' typify parents' views.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the school and achieve well. Overall, they enter Nursery with knowledge and skills at levels that are below those expected for their age, learn successfully and make good progress. By the end of Nursery, their attainment is typical for their age overall. However, their learning and progress in spoken language and in mathematical reasoning are not as strong as in other areas. This is because of limited opportunities to talk when learning in large groups, and on occasions, the narrow range of questioning and insufficient discussion between children and adults, particularly outdoors. Mathematics does not have as high a profile as other areas of the curriculum. Adults are not as confident in this area of learning and opportunities to develop children's mathematical understanding and promote reasoning are not always seized upon during practical activities. These factors hold back the development of children's spoken language and their capacity to reason mathematically.

Good provision in the school largely promotes successful learning. Much of the teaching is good and children benefit from a rich curriculum and a wealth of stimulating activities. Good use of assessment identifies the next steps required to move children's learning forward. Tailored education plans to meet children's individual needs help those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language and more-able children to make equally good progress.

Ambition, drive and commitment are influential aspects of the school's leadership. Good monitoring of the school's work ensures that self-evaluation is accurate in identifying areas for improvement. The school has maintained the good-quality provision reported at the previous inspection, addressed the issues arising from the inspection and built on its strengths to establish a good capacity for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By 2011 improve children's spoken language by:
 - ensuring that adults are readily available to question and extend children's

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thinking and understanding, particularly through their work outdoors

- strengthening adults' questioning to ensure that children are helped to explain their ideas fully
- providing more opportunities for individual children to express their ideas.
- By 2011 improve children's mathematical calculation and reasoning by:
 - making mathematical areas as attractive and engaging as other areas
 - increasing adults' understanding of children's mathematical development
 - seizing opportunities to develop children's calculation and reasoning skills when they are engaged in a variety of activities

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**2**

Children are active and eager learners and achieve well. They are often highly motivated and concentrate for long periods on activities that interest them, such as using computers. They listen attentively, answer questions enthusiastically and explore and learn with real intent. Children practise and improve new skills successfully, such as writing and drawing. Their knowledge and understanding of the world blossoms, for example, by investigating shape and plants and through role play. Physical skills, such as climbing and balancing, develop rapidly and children often become engrossed in role play, which ignites their creativity and imagination.

Personal, social and emotional development is particularly good and evident in children's growing independence. Weaker elements in their spoken language and mathematical development are partly due to pupils being new to learning English but also to missed opportunities to develop these aspects of their learning. Children at an early stage of learning English as an additional language integrate well and experiment with language. The vast majority of them learn to listen with good understanding and to make themselves understood by the second year of school. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good strides in their learning because of the very effective additional support they receive.

The very supportive family atmosphere and attention to personal, social and health education help children to understand the consequences of their actions and how to stay safe. The strong emphasis placed on exercise and healthy eating helps children to adopt healthy lifestyles and good hygiene in the school. Relationships are excellent. Children from diverse backgrounds integrate seamlessly and learn to understand and respect cultural differences. They make a good contribution to the school and wider community by taking initiative, for example by acting responsibly, looking after others and taking care of equipment. Behaviour is exemplary throughout. Children learn to play cooperatively, use computers confidently and play happily together. They make good progress overall in acquiring key skills which help to prepare them for the future. Enjoyment of school is reflected in pride in achievement and good attendance.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Children benefit from a wide range of well-planned and resourced, ever-changing, highly stimulating activities, indoors and outside. Even so, the mathematical area is less attractive and interesting than other resources. Small-group activities, led by adults, are often very successful in developing children's understanding and spoken language. For example, making pizzas encouraged children to talk about their home experiences. Whole-class discussion improves children's listening and helps them to choose activities, although it does not develop speaking sufficiently. This is because they speak in turn and not all have the opportunity to do so at each session.

Good assessment based on regular observations is used increasingly well to identify the next steps. These are recorded and help adults to match the activities provided to children's individual learning needs, to raise the challenge and keep parents and carers informed. It helps ensure that adults cater for children's very diverse learning needs. As a result, for example, children at an early stage of learning English as an additional language regularly receive additional language support and more-able children are already learning about letters and sounds. Adults are developing questioning through the 'Every child a talker' project with some success, although there is more to do. Occasionally, large numbers of children gather around a popular activity, such as building a castle, but adults do not always respond quickly enough to extend children's

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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spoken language. Adults have good knowledge of the areas of learning, apart from mathematical development, which is currently the focus of training.

The mostly thoroughly planned curriculum enables children to build upon earlier learning. It is flexible in response to children's interests. For example, their fascination with camping arose from individual interests. Staff eagerly broaden children's experiences through visits near and far and by inviting visitors to share their skills and enthusiasm in areas such as dance and gymnastics.

The key worker system provides excellent pastoral care and has a very good impact on children's behaviour. Parents and carers greatly value the good advice and guidance provided by staff. Adults are very effective in identifying and supporting vulnerable children and engage very effectively with outside agencies, such as health professionals, to minimise any barriers to learning. Good induction helps children settle quickly and happily into school. Contact with primary schools helps smooth transfer into the next sector of education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's drive, ambition and vision unite staff towards common goals. The curriculum, teaching and assessment have all improved since the previous inspection. Procedures to track children's progress have been implemented and the information is used effectively to guide planning. Checking planning and analysing assessments help to eliminate inconsistencies and increase children's progress. Teaching sessions are observed, which help staff to reflect on how to improve children's learning, although observations of children's learning, when they are not being directly taught by an adult, are only just beginning. The school gives importance to staff training, for example advisers from the local authority have provided objective assessments of the work of the school and the views of parents and carers are taken into account. These factors are at the heart of accurate self-evaluation and strategic planning.

The contribution made by governors is satisfactory although improving rapidly. Their enthusiasm to undertake training and visit the school is helping them to move the school forward and results in satisfactory yet growing ability to increase their monitoring and evaluation role in order to better hold the school to account. Keeping parents well-informed and involving them in their children's Nursery experiences make a very

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positive contribution to children's learning and welfare. Particularly effective partnerships with health and education professionals, involvement in local language and environmental projects and through working in tandem with local schools on assessment have helped the school to move forward in areas that it could not have done single-handedly.

Equality is strongly promoted. The school challenges stereotyping well, tackles discrimination and is highly inclusive. Gaps in attainment between different groups of children, such as boys and girls, and children who speak English as an additional language and those who do not, are quickly identified and closed. Good safeguarding procedures ensure that children's safety is paramount and assured. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. Although the analysis of its setting within the community has only been informally undertaken, the school is a place of social harmony and reaches out to involve the wider and global community in its work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers returned the questionnaires. The returns were highly positive in all areas. All of the respondents judged that staff kept their children safe. All parents and carers stated that their children made enough progress because of good teaching and effective leadership. All parents and carers agreed that the school helped their children to lead a healthy lifestyle, were positive that their children enjoyed

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school and very happy with their children's school experiences. Almost all parents and carers felt the school met their children's particular needs, dealt effectively with any unacceptable behaviour and took account of parents' and carers' suggestions and concerns. Almost all parents and carers believe that that their children are well prepared to the future and only one or two parents and carers felt the need for more information about their children's progress, which the school is addressing. Inspectors endorse parents' and carers' positive view in all of these areas.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Abercromby 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 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 58 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	76	8	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	78	8	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	57	13	35	3	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	73	10	27	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	81	7	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	57	14	38	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	68	11	30	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)	24	65	12	32	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	62	11	30	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	70	9	24	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	65	11	30	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	73	10	27	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	78	7	19	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

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.



30 April 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Abercromby Nursery School, Liverpool, L8 7QA

I loved my visit to the nursery because you were so friendly. I want to tell you what I found out.

You attend a good nursery. You have lots of exciting things to do such as making pizzas, using computers and looking after plants. I could tell just how much you enjoy the nursery by watching you play together, find out new things and learn new words. You are doing really well and make good progress.

Grown-ups take very good care of you and keep you safe: this is why you are so happy and beautifully behaved. Grown-ups make each day different and interesting. They teach you very well when you work together in small groups. They watch you carefully, make little notes about your learning and write them down for your parents and carers to see. This is good because it helps grown-ups in the nursery and your parents and carers at home help you to learn more each day.

Your headteacher and governors do a good job in making your nursery a safe and fun place to be. They never stop trying to make it better by bringing new toys, books and new ideas to help you learn as much as you possibly can.

Your nursery is good but my role is it to help it become even better. I have asked your headteacher and teachers to help you to talk as much as possible in the classroom and outside. Learning new words will help you with reading and writing when you are older.

I have also asked the headteacher and teachers to make the number area more interesting and to teach you how to find, for example, 'more than' and 'less than' a given amount, which some of you find difficult.

Yours sincerely

Mr Colin Smith

Lead inspector

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