

Ashfield Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108427
Local Authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	337072
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Linda Buller

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Alison Priestley
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Stoker
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed four teachers, visited six lessons and spent around 55% of time directly observing children's learning. They held meetings with governors and staff and spoke informally with many children. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to the leadership and management of the school and children's learning and progress, including teachers' planning and records of children's 'learning journeys'. The inspectors also took into account the views expressed in the questionnaires completed by 15 staff and 77 parents and carers.

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

- how well the school has adapted provision to meet the needs of different groups of children, particularly those at an early stage of learning to speak English or who speak English as an additional language
- the quality of provision and of children's learning in problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy skills
- how effectively leaders and managers have used self-evaluation to drive improvement, particularly in relation to children's problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy skills.

Information about the school

The nursery school offers full-time education for children once they have passed their third birthday. They spend between three and five terms at the school before transferring to Reception classes in local primary schools. Over half of the children are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. One quarter of children speak little or no English on entry to the school. A small proportion of children are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Fifty per cent of children are eligible for free school meals. The school has achieved a number of awards in recent years, including Healthy Schools, Investors in Children and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Since May 2009 the school has shared its building with a private day-care facility. This provision did not form part of this inspection but the report can be found on the Ofsted website.

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 school provides an excellent quality of education. Its success centres on the early identification of the individual needs of children and highly effective partnerships with parents and carers. These begin with home visits which ensure that children get off to an excellent start on their learning journey when they begin Nursery. Children join the Nursery with skills at levels that are well below those expected for their age. Outstanding levels of care, skilful teaching and an exciting, vibrant curriculum provide each child with equal opportunity to succeed. The school constantly seeks ways to improve provision even further, for example devising exciting ways to improve children's problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy skills; a relative weakness identified at the last inspection. As a result, children's skills develop rapidly with the majority of children attaining levels broadly in line with expectations for their age in most areas of their learning by the time they move onto their next school. Those children who enter the Nursery speaking little or no English make outstanding progress due to high-quality innovative provision, for example, the use of Makaton signing which provides an effective means of communication. Staff use skilled observation of children's learning to assess how well each child is doing. They use this information well to plan activities and to set individual targets for children. Staff are adept at intuitively capitalising on opportunities for learning and in challenging children to reach higher standards. However, this level of challenge is dependent on the skill of staff and is not always fully reflected in the targets set for individuals or in teachers' planning.

Leaders and managers have a shared ambition to maintain the best possible provision for the children in their care. Children and their families demonstrate total confidence in the ability of staff to ensure that children remain happy, safe and secure. Excellent relationships and a total commitment of all staff to create a cohesive community lead to children's excellent personal development. Rigorous systems of self-evaluation ensure that every opportunity is taken to promote children's knowledge and understanding, including the celebration of their wide range of backgrounds and cultures. Consequently, children become independent and imaginative learners who delight in each other's company, accepting differences and valuing each other as individuals. The school has sustained and built further on the outstanding quality of education identified at the previous inspection and has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to support children's outstanding learning and progress by:
 - ensuring that the targets set for individual children keep pace with their rapid

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progress

- ensuring that children's challenging targets are fully reflected in teachers' plans.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children really enjoy their learning. From the moment they arrive each morning they are fully engaged in activities which capture their imagination. They sustain high levels of concentration and perseverance because activities take full account of their interests and needs. They are able to follow instructions exceptionally well and their faces shine with pride in their good achievement. Children, whatever their starting points or abilities, make excellent progress in all areas of their learning. This is particularly evident in their personal, social and emotional development which, together with much improved basic literacy and numeracy skills, ensures that they are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Children's behaviour is excellent because staff have consistently high expectations of them to which they respond readily. Attendance is broadly average. Children quickly develop an understanding of the difference between right and wrong, and relationships between them are outstanding. They demonstrate knowledge of how to keep themselves safe which belies their years. For example, in the outdoor area they are able to take on board the safety warnings issued by staff and use this information in their engagement in adventurous play, amending their actions and the risks they take to make sure they stay safe. Children make an excellent contribution to the school community and eagerly take responsibility for putting things away, tidying up and supporting one another to access all that the school provides. They know that fruit and vegetables are good for them and make sensible independent choices of snacks and at lunchtimes. Children delight in being active and whatever the weather are keen to experience exercise and fresh air, which they know will help them grow strong.

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	2
Taking into account:	
Children's attainment ¹	3
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

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

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	
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 Taking into account: Children's attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Highly experienced staff, with an excellent knowledge of how young children learn, are a key feature of the school's provision. There are plenty of opportunities for children to work and play with adults and each other or to pursue interests and learning on their own. Skilled interaction by staff, for example in role play, is a major contribution to children's excellent progress in their language development. Classrooms are rich in language and numeracy displays which are used well to support children's learning. Ongoing assessments of children's learning build into a comprehensive picture of each child's development in different strands of learning. Each child is set individual targets for learning which are reflected in teachers' planning. Occasionally these targets are not adjusted often enough to reflect the rapid progress which children have made. On these few occasions opportunities are missed to adjust plans for children's next steps in learning.

A rich and creative mix of activities both indoors and out provide children with memorable experiences and a thirst for learning. Increased opportunities to practise numeracy skills, such as making sandwich shapes, number rhymes and dice games, help children to reach levels similar to those in other areas of their learning. Lunchtimes are expertly managed to be sociable learning occasions where children develop good manners and make sensible healthy eating choices. Group and circle times contribute greatly to children's social and emotional development. They also provide excellent opportunities for children to review what they have learnt and how they can develop their learning further.

Outstanding levels of care are provided for children in every respect to ensure their well-being. The school's support for children whose circumstances have made them vulnerable is excellent. Staff excel at getting to know each child in their care as an individual. Early identification of specific needs and very close working with parents and carers, as well as agencies such as the behaviour support service, mean that children receive first-rate support to help them thrive.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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 headteacher effectively leads a team of staff who share her high aspirations to provide the best early years education. Involvement of all staff in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work ensures that a close check is kept on all aspects of provision and the impact this has on outcomes for children. Safeguarding procedures are good. Staff and volunteers are carefully vetted to check their suitability for working with children. Regular training and clear procedures ensure that all staff have a good understanding of how to safeguard children from harm. Staff promote equality of opportunity extremely well, ensuring that all children, whatever their background or needs, make rapid progress. The school's excellent focus on home visits and links with groups of parents and carers whose children are due to start school are of great benefit. They help children to settle well and assist parents and carers in developing a real involvement in their children's learning. Children's 'learning journey' records give parents and carers a clear idea of how well their children are doing, with photographs used exceptionally well to allow them to share those magic moments when children recognise they have learnt something new.

The work of the school to promote community cohesion is good overall and outstanding within the school and local area. Plans and actions are firmly based on a thorough understanding of the diverse religious, cultural and social context of the local area. Plans are in place to extend the outstanding school and local provision to areas beyond the school and to involve the school once again in the International School Award. The governing body provides good support to the school. Despite the quick turnover of parent and carer members due to the short time their children are in the school, the governing body successfully ensures statutory requirements are met and provides appropriate challenge to the school's leadership.

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 Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
	1

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who spoke to inspectors and the large number who returned the inspection questionnaires were wholly positive about the education provided for their children. Additional comments reflected their high levels of satisfaction regarding the levels of care that the school provides, how happy their children are and how quickly they learn. Inspectors fully agree with parents and carers' positive views of the provision.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ashfield 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 77 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 104 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	86	11	14	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	63	82	13	17	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	47	61	30	39	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	70	23	30	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	62	81	15	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	74	20	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	70	22	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)	49	64	25	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	68	23	30	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	53	69	24	31	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	64	25	32	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	59	77	17	22	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	66	86	11	14	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"> ■ 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.



2 March 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Ashfield Nursery School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4 6JR

Thank you for letting me spend a few days at your nursery school and for sharing with me all the wonderful activities which help you learn so well. I agree with your parents and carers that Ashfield is an outstanding school and I can understand why you are all so happy there.

You are especially good at doing things for yourselves and at playing very nicely with each other. You look after each other very well and this helps to make sure everybody enjoys their time in school and learns lots of exciting new things. You have lots of places to run around and explore in your outside area, which you clearly enjoy even when the weather means you need to cover up in your wellingtons and waterproofs.

All of the adults in school care about you very much and make sure you are safe. When they come to visit you at home before you begin at Nursery they find out exactly how to help you learn. Those of you who cannot speak English quickly learn new words because everyone gives you such a lot of help and support.

Even though your school is outstanding, your headteacher and the other adults want it to get even better so they are going to make sure that everything they plan for you to do helps you to take the next steps in your learning.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller

Lead inspector

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