

# York Road Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117071
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	338942
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 September 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Vale

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	120
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Routh
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Griffiths
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	York Road Hitchin SG5 1XA
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, one of whom visited the school for half a day specifically to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures. Eight lessons were observed and all teachers and support staff were seen. Children were observed at play and at lunchtimes. They were also observed working both in small groups and in one-to-one support work, particularly for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities in enrichment groups.

Meetings were held with the headteacher and with staff in charge of assessment. Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and some parents. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of school documents including the school development plan, tracking information, policies and procedures, and the Hertfordshire Quality assurance work. In addition, they took into account 66 questionnaires from parents and carers and questionnaires from staff.

- The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:
- The monitoring of assessment and progress and how tracking is used to help raise children's attainment.
- Provision for special educational needs through the use of enrichment groups.
- Whether the nursery has maintained its high standards since the previous inspection.

## Information about the school

This is an average sized nursery school that since the last inspection has become a children's centre. Extended integrated day care operates in the same building but this aspect was not part of this inspection. Children come from all areas of Hitchin and nearby villages. About two thirds of the children are from White British backgrounds and there are a few from other groups. Currently 15 children are learning English as an additional language, although very few are totally new to English. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average and these mainly relate to physical needs. The nursery has Healthy Schools status and Hertfordshire Quality Standards accreditation.

**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

The school provides an outstanding start to children's education. It lives up to its mission statement, 'To provide a fun, stimulating learning environment for all.' Children achieve extremely well from broadly expected starting points to well above what is expected for their age when they leave.

There are excellent links with children's families supported from the moment the children arrive in the school. Parents are very positive in their views about the nursery. As one parent commented, reflecting the views of many: 'York Road is an excellent nursery school. The staff work extremely hard to maintain high standards, and are approachable and professional at all times... I can only praise the school for its outstanding work.' These links are enhanced by days such as 'Grandparents' Day' and 'Dads behaving Dadly!' where fathers are encouraged to attend the nursery with their children on a Saturday so that they can be included in their children's learning

The spiritual, moral, and social development of the children is good. Children's behaviour is outstanding. Healthy lifestyles are adopted well and children participate in lots of physical activities throughout the day. Many enjoy the healthy lunch provided, and the challenge which the new climbing frame provides. However, the cultural development of the children is less well developed.

Teaching is consistently good. It has a number of outstanding features, such as the way all staff engage and motivate children in their learning through the excellent use of questioning. Detailed assessment procedures in place help to ensure that all children make more than expected progress in their learning and in developing new skills. There are, however, some inconsistencies in individual teachers' approaches to informing, recording and extending children's next steps for learning. Children are cared for very well and benefit from excellent guidance and support.

Leadership and management are excellent. Senior staff are highly experienced and this drive motivates and challenges all involved to, as one member of the governing body said, '...continuously strive for the best and for the good of the children.' The governing body is outstanding in its support and challenge for the school, and highly successful in its role as a critical friend. Self-evaluation is not only accurate but truly evaluative as can be seen with the way the nursery has identified the need for further development of children's knowledge and understanding of different cultures. Community cohesion is of an equally high standard. The centre offers excellent value for money. Consequently the school clearly demonstrates that it has outstanding capacity to sustain the continuous excellent rate of improvement evident since its last inspection.

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

- Review and implement revised assessment procedures in order to ensure consistency among all teachers in recording and using assessment information to better inform their planning of children's next steps in learning.
- Enhance children's knowledge and understanding of other cultures and beliefs.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

**1**

Children make outstanding progress in all aspects of their learning. There are no differences in the progress made by girls and boys. They respond extremely well to their teachers' active encouragement to become confident and independent learners right from their first experiences at nursery. This was seen when children in the role-play area were developing their speaking and listening skills by taking their animals to the vets' surgery. Some animals were very sick indeed but children were working out how they could make them better. Equally good independence of learning was seen when children were outside, sharing bikes, exploring the new climbing frame, working out how to move from one part to another without falling off, or acting out imaginative games. This independence of thought and engagement in problem-solving is a major contributor to children making such outstanding progress in their learning and why they achieve so highly. The very few children who are new to learning English as an additional language make outstanding progress due to consistently good teaching and support.

Behaviour is excellent. Despite being right at the start of term and a whole new experience for many of the children, they have already settled in and are highly motivated and engaged learners. Consequently, the spiritual, moral and social aspect of the children's development is good. They are actively involved in making decisions for themselves about what they want to play with, which enhances their progress. Although children celebrate the main religious festivals, they do not develop a sufficient understanding of other cultures in comparison to their own.

Few children at the nursery are identified with any specific learning needs. The majority arrive with attainment which is broadly expected for their age. Children identified as requiring extra support benefit from enrichment groups; these are fun and highly appreciated by both the children and their parents. One parent wrote to the inspectors, 'The enrichment groups helped my son fabulously with his speech and confidence. All the staff know my child really well, helping him to feel secure and ready to have a go at anything.'

*These are the grades for children's outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

The inspection confirmed the nursery's own view that the quality of teaching is consistently good. It is this consistency of approach from all staff when working directly with the children which contributes so positively to the excellent progress which children make in their learning and development. Teachers are highly skilled in engaging and motivating children in all aspects of their learning. There were some outstanding examples seen of children being challenged to think through their adults' well thought out use of questioning. For example, the photographer was in school during the inspection so children were very interested in taking their own photos and these were uploaded on to a computer. By the end of the session really good language work was coming from the children who were explaining how to take a clear photo and what went wrong if it was 'fuzzy'. At other times adults support learning through becoming part of the play that the children are experiencing, taking on the role of the vet or being part of the work force outside transporting bricks. This effective role modelling of language and play successfully accelerates the progress made by children.

Lunch has been introduced as an integral part of both the morning or afternoon session. While this is an amiable social event, there are missed opportunities to continue developing children's freedom of choice and independence by not allowing them to serve themselves or to make their own decisions about what they would like to eat. All adults work with the children extremely well, and have well-established routines that help the children settle in really quickly. The calm, purposeful caring atmosphere along with the stimulating curriculum and varied and exciting activities on offer ensure that

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children settle rapidly into their new environment. One mother of a child with specific learning difficulties spoke positively of the support being given. Assessment of children's knowledge, skills and understanding is regularly undertaken and is very thorough, although there is still some room for improvement. Regular observations and discussions about individual children's interests are well documented and there are excellent summaries of what each child knows and can do. However, there is not a consistent approach to planning which includes the next steps for children's learning and ensuring that these are shared amongst both staff and parents.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The highly experienced and effective leadership and management team has a strong sense of purpose to help all children achieve to the best of their abilities. The exceedingly practised, stable and harmonious team support children successfully to develop as confident, competent independent learners. Such attributes are at the heart of the nursery's aims and aspirations for their children. Governance is outstanding. The governing body makes an exceptional contribution to the work and direction of the school. Its members are vigorous in all that they do, are adept at keeping the work of the nursery under review and act upon their findings for the best interests of the children. Statutory requirements for safeguarding children's well-being were implemented fully at the time of the inspection. Excellent links with a variety of other agencies support children and their families.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. Very good communication between home and school is started right from when the children first attend. Little touches, such as individual children's 'Magic Moment Books', where parents can contribute significant things that have happened at home, keep these close links going. Community cohesion is very good. A community day, originally planned to celebrate the opening of the children's centre, proved such a success that this is now held annually. Excellent links with a nursery in Gambia gives children some opportunities to see how children live in other parts of the world, but there are limited links with other cultures in the local and British community. The nursery has a strong and effective commitment to ensuring that all children have equal opportunity to thrive and that there is no discrimination. It uses its considerable knowledge of each child's individual needs and interests extremely well

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to secure this. The nursery's capacity for continuous improvement and maintaining the high standards over a number of years is outstanding.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Views of parents and carers

Just over half the parents returned the questionnaires; this is a higher than average return rate. All of them were overwhelmingly positive about the nursery and how well their children blossom and thrive. Although some parents whose children had only been attending a few weeks felt that some of the questions were difficult to answer, they could already see that their children were growing in confidence in just a short space of time. A couple of working parents commented that they would like more communication between home and school and how they could help their children at home. The inspection team found that there is good communication between home and school.



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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at York Road 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 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 120 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	85	9	14	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	53	80	12	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	58	25	38	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	53	21	32	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	49	74	13	20	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	52	26	39	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	55	23	35	2	3	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)	33	50	21	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	64	20	30	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	44	29	44	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	50	28	42	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	52	79	12	18	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	76	16	24	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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"><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.**



22 September 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of York Road Nursery School, Hitchin, SG5 1XA

Thank you so much for making me so welcome when I came to see you in your excellent nursery. It is a lovely place to be. I really liked some of the activities that you do. It was fun seeing all the different things that you have to play with. I hope the guinea pigs are keeping well and that you are looking after them.

You are very fortunate as your nursery is excellent.

Most of you make outstanding progress from when you first start at nursery.

Your parents said, and I agree with them, that you learn so much so quickly and that you really become very confident learners.

There are outstanding links between your nursery and your home. I really like the fact that your dads get invited in on a Saturday to see what you get up to and also so do your grandparents.

You learn such a lot and are extremely well prepared for the next steps in your learning.

Teaching really supports you in helping you to develop your skills and knowledge and understanding of the world around you.

There is an outstanding, stimulating curriculum for you all to follow.

All of you behave very well.

I hope that you continue to enjoy the fun things that there are to do and that you keep making such outstanding progress in your learning. I have asked the grown-ups to look at the way they record and share with you your next steps for learning. I have also asked them to help you to learn more about other cultures and how other people live.

Yours sincerely

Susan Vale

Lead inspector

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