

Bentilee Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123970
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	340460
Inspection dates	14–15 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Jane Hughes

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	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ann Harvey
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Massey
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Dawlish Drive Bentilee Stoke-on-Trent ST2 0HW
Telephone number	01782 235065
Fax number	01782 235065
Email address	bentilee@sgfl.org.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons and observed eight teachers. Inspectors held meetings with governors and staff and also spoke to children, parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's plans, self-evaluation, policies, assessment and tracking systems, safeguarding procedures and children's work. Inspectors examined questionnaires from 35 parents, as well as those from staff.

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

- how well the school supports children's language development
- whether current provision offers sufficient challenge to higher attainers
- the impact of recent remodelling in developing an enabling learning environment for all children
- the extent to which the leadership has sustained previously identified outstanding practice.

Information about the school

Up to 60 children attend the nursery full time. Six children in ten are known to be eligible for free school meals. Approximately one quarter of the children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Almost all children are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. The school has Healthy School status and the Investors in People award.

The school is situated within Treehouse Children's Centre. A private provider, Tiny Toez, offers year-round, on-site day care, Monday to Friday, 07.30 to 6pm. The nursery headteacher was the designated head of the centre for two years from April 2008 to 2010.

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

Bentilee Nursery is an outstanding school. Its many strengths provide a memorable start to children's education. Parents and carers are full of praise for the school. They typically comment, 'This school has given my child an invaluable experience.' The school's outstanding capacity for sustained improvement is reflected in its maintenance of previously excellent performance, the further improvements it has made, and its accurate, clear and regular evaluation of relative strengths and development priorities. As a result, children's learning and development and the overall effectiveness of the school are as impressive now as three years ago. Senior leaders constantly seek to improve practice at all levels, no matter how high the starting point. The school works very hard to engage parents and carers in their children's learning and establishes highly effective partnerships with other organisations to complement its own work. This is helped greatly by the very close links with the host children's centre. It is testament to the school's excellent organisation and well embedded systems that during the headteacher's two year period as head of centre, there was no drop in focus at the school from the highest expectations and outcomes.

The majority of outcomes for children are first rate. Children behave beautifully and know how to stay safe. They eat healthily and know that exercise keeps them fit. They take their responsibilities very seriously and fulfil them conscientiously. Children make friends easily, respect each other and totally accept differences between people. They are well equipped with basic and wider personal skills to enhance future learning. Parents and carers generally ensure that their children attend regularly and on time. Children learn and develop exceptionally well because they experience the highest quality of teaching every day. Engaging and very varied curriculum opportunities ensure they enjoy learning. Parents and carers appreciate all aspects of the school's high quality care, guidance and support.

Most elements of leadership and management are of the highest order and ensure that the school provides excellent value for money. Staff morale is very high. The governing body is very supportive of the school and committed to its continued success. Even so, it does not offer sufficient challenge or focused support to the leadership. Although safeguarding procedures are exemplary in practice, some monitoring of policies and practice lacks the rigour that best practice requires. The school is highly inclusive and ensures equality of opportunity for all. There is a keen focus on the promotion of community cohesion so children develop an awareness of their own and others' cultural heritage as well as the diversity of British society.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Increase the impact of the highly supportive governing body by ensuring it contributes even more rigorously and widely to overall school self-evaluation and the monitoring of specific aspects of the school's work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children are quick to take on independent tasks because they listen intently to adults as they explain the different activities. They delight in using the wide range of equipment outdoors where they balance, climb, jump and pedal with increasing skill. Children are keen problem solvers. For instance, they recreate patterns using interlocking plastic neon shapes with great care. They quickly recognise where they make mistakes and correct these. They think through how to create specific scenes with large construction blocks, such as a boat on the sea, and persevere until the task is completed to their satisfaction. They enjoy trying new foods such as broad beans at lunchtime and relish those they have helped to grow themselves. Children are very proud of the setting and their behaviour is exemplary. They are quick to tidy away when sessions end. Much teamwork is in evidence as one child brushes up the sandy floor while another holds the bucket, for example. They become quickly familiar with school routines because they visit frequently in the term before they start.

Children achieve well and thoroughly enjoy each day. When they join the school, children's skills vary but, overall, they are well below those expected, particularly in their speech and language skills. They make rapid progress and leave with skills broadly at the levels expected for their age. Some achieve above the expected levels in their personal, social, emotional and physical development. They show care and consideration to each other, collaborate well and demonstrate respect for the ideas of others. They have a developing understanding of their own cultures and local heritage and are also aware that people in Britain are very different. This is because they visit and work alongside another nursery setting where children come from a wide range of ethnically diverse backgrounds. They raise funds for local, national and international charities and know that this work benefits others. All children eat school dinner every day. They have a very clear understanding that foods like chicken and beef 'help your body to get strong', that 'vegetables are good for you' and that 'chocolate and sweets are really junk but are nice sometimes!'

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

1

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

How effective is the provision?

Highly skilled staff bring learning to life for children here. A recent reorganisation of the indoor and outdoor environments ensures that children are able to learn in an environment that allows them to develop their skills across the required six areas of learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff encourage children to develop the valuable skills needed for them to become independent learners and are adept at encouraging children to make decisions, to think through problems and to reach their own conclusions. Challenging yet thoughtful questioning by adults very effectively extends children's learning and skills development. For example, some children were slightly horrified as they were urged by staff to squelch their hands in a glutinous cornflour mix. This soon turned to amazement as they saw how the consistency of the mix changed the longer they held it in their hands. The adults marvelled at the children's discoveries and encouraged them to describe what they could see and feel. Accurate assessments and focused observations of what children know, understand and can do enable all the staff to prepare activities that match individual children's needs. As a result, those who are capable of reaching higher levels in their work are well supported to do so.

The engaging curriculum is developed in response to children's needs and so is varied from year to year. There is a strong emphasis on helping children to develop the skills they will need to succeed in the future. In particular, innovative methods are used to develop children's speech and language skills. Excellent links with other organisations enrich the school's own work. For instance, children have weekly access to the huge playspace in the children's centre and this develops further their physical and social

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skills. Much time is spent in ensuring children have opportunities to use their developing skills creatively across all areas of learning and this helps them to become increasingly imaginative.

An impressively comprehensive induction programme ensures that parents, carers and children receive just the right levels of information and support to allay any worries. Parents and carers declare that 'all the teachers are great' as they settle children in with little fuss. There is highly effective provision for all groups of children and this has developed over the years to meet the varying needs of each year group. Expectations of children remain very high by all adults and there is a very consistent approach to the management of children's behaviour. Although not statutory, administrative staff work efficiently to promote the benefits of regular attendance among parents and carers and this pays dividends as most children come to school regularly and on time. Transition arrangements to Reception classes are equally secure and follow best practice.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
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?

Inspirational leadership and management maintain a relentless commitment to providing the absolutely best experiences and outcomes for children, families and the local community. All adults share this key commitment. They work as a strong team and constantly reappraise what works well and how they could develop practice still further. Staff meet regularly to discuss the progress of each child and to decide how best to support each individual's future learning. Each staff member takes responsibility for a different area of learning and works conscientiously and with skill to ensure that every element of each learning programme is fully explored. There is a very strong focus on the maintenance of first class teaching with robust monitoring by senior leaders. Staff quickly identify any potential barriers to learning and efficiently overcome these. A prime example is that the school now employs speech and language specialists to work daily in school with children in order to diagnose and surmount their communication difficulties. This is proving very successful and enables far more children to reach the expected levels by the time they leave. The expertise is also shared among the whole staff team, thus providing strong professional development. Attention to every detail and a real enthusiasm to do the best for the children ensure that the school continues to provide outstanding experiences for all.

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The commitment of the governing body to support the whole school community is clear. Nevertheless, governance does not offer sufficiently robust challenge to the school. The headteacher often leads the governing body in a certain direction rather than benefiting from its focused intervention. The school goes well beyond the statutory requirements for safeguarding children. Very secure daily practice outstrips the written policies which still lack a few details that prevent this element of leadership and management from being first rate overall. Parents and carers confirm that the school takes very good care of their children and inspection findings corroborate these views. Adults promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination exceptionally well so that all children reach their potential, irrespective of background, gender or individual need. Higher attaining children are quickly identified and receive appropriate levels of challenge to ensure they are ready to work at higher levels when they move on to Reception classes elsewhere. The school promotes community cohesion to great effect. Not only do children have a good grounding in the local cultural heritage linked to mining and the potteries but they also benefit from links with a nursery that enjoys a far greater multicultural mix than the largely monocultural Bentilee. An additional programme of work with a twin school in Romania is in its early stages.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

Just over half of all parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. An

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overwhelming majority is highly supportive of the school. They comment variously, 'A wonderful experience', 'A lovely school' and, 'My child has made great progress'. These also reflect the very positive feedback from the school's own surveys. Very few responses raise individual concerns and these have no underlying pattern. The inspection team agrees with parents' and carers' positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bentilee 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 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 60 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	91	3	9	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	91	3	9	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	80	6	17	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	77	7	20	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	83	6	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	74	9	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	77	8	23	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)	25	71	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	74	9	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	63	12	34	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	66	12	34	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	26	74	9	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	86	5	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

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.



19 July 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Bentilee Nursery School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST2 0HW

I visited your Nursery before the summer holidays when the older children were still there. Some of you may remember this because it was on one of the days when you came to 'stay and play' with your parents and carers. I have written about what I found. Perhaps your teachers will read it to you at group time.

Right at the bottom of Treehouse Children's Centre is a happy and very friendly school – Bentilee Nursery School. Children love it because all the adults make sure that everyone is safe and has an interesting and jolly time. The children want to come back day after day. Bentilee is an outstanding school. That long word means 'very, very good'. Perhaps some of you will be able to count how many letters there are in that long word by the time you leave! Here are some of the best things about the Nursery.

- All the children learn and play very well.
- Adults take excellent care of the children.
- Children behave so well, look after each other and help their teachers.
- The children know a lot about how to be healthy and safe.
- The headteacher and other adults know exactly how to make the school even better.

Your school's governors help the school to work well. They are going to check even more closely how well the school is doing so that it can continue to get even better.

I hope you all enjoy growing more colourful flowers, crunchy salad and tasty vegetables in the lovely garden that your parents and carers help you to dig and sow.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Jane Hughes

Lead Inspector

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