

Seaham Harbour Nursery School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 113975 |
| Local Authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 325916 |
| Inspection dates | 13–14 May 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Andrew Scott |

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

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| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3–4 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 76 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Peter Ward |
| Headteacher | Mrs Carole Lesley Scott |
| Date of previous school inspection | 2 March 2006 |
| School address | Bottleworks Road Seaham Harbour Seaham County Durham SR7 7NN |
| Telephone number | 0191 5812829 |
| Fax number | 0191 5812829 |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

This nursery school serves a locality of increasingly mixed socio-economic conditions with some areas of disadvantage. Almost all children come from White British families; all speak English as their first language. A very small number of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school hosts a full day-care service which is run by a private provider and did not form a part of this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Children thrive in a highly stimulating environment and make excellent progress in their learning, as well as in their personal development. The extremely skilled staff are very aware of the needs of children of this age and have high expectations of all that the children do. They also provide an outstanding quality of care that enables children to be totally at ease yet inspired to work. Consequently, children become fulfilled and rapidly develop a wide range of skills which boosts their self-esteem. It is no surprise that parents are delighted with the school's provision, and that it is heavily oversubscribed. One wrote, typically: 'My child comes home full of what she has done through the day.' Another added: 'All educational establishments should be like this'.

Children start school with attainment that is lower than usual for three-year-olds, especially in language, and personal and social skills. Progress is swift for all children, regardless of their background or abilities, because staff provide work that fires their imaginations and constantly challenges them. Staff are so adept at introducing new learning that it blends almost unobtrusively into the very interactive day. Staff are very subtle at asking questions and prompting actions so that children can learn on their own through discovery, and trial and error. Their power of concentration is intense, whether working on their own or with others. Because of the rich input, their achievement is excellent and they reach levels expected for their age at the end of the year and some exceed them.

Children love their school and attendance is good. They quickly learn the very sensible routines and enjoy working because all activities are stimulating. Behaviour is excellent, children are tolerant and thoughtful; they listen to one another respectfully and readily take turns. They know that to be active is good for them, along with a healthy diet. Their preparation for the next stage of their education is excellent.

All this is made possible by outstanding leadership and management at all levels. The vision, energy and dedication of the headteacher set the benchmarks that all staff and governors share, and ensure continuous improvement in the school. All staff are enthusiastic and committed and, importantly, adopt the same techniques. This consistency is impressive. Even so, the school never rests on its laurels. It has an excellent self-awareness. Its evaluation has revealed that, while interaction with the local community is very strong, it has yet to do enough to acquaint children fully with the wider world. All in all, though, the school is in excellent shape and provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend children's awareness of the world beyond the immediate locality to broaden the promotion of community cohesion.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children's achievement is outstanding. They tend to enter school with skills and abilities below those typical for their age. Because of the rich environment and excellent teaching, children make rapid progress and reach levels expected of four-year-olds by the end of their time in the Nursery. Some children do even better. Children make the best progress in language and personal development; these are their weakest attributes when they begin but are on a par

with other areas of learning when they leave. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve equally as impressively as other children, whatever their specific needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development is excellent. They are very happy in school because of the warmth and high quality of care that staff provide. As a result, they swiftly gain a zest for learning and the independence to learn through investigation. During the inspection, they explored the flow of water through playing with real fire hoses and some learned about its impact the wet way! They sustain considerable concentration, for example, when scrupulously applying 'paint' to their fort outside. The calm, supportive atmosphere enables them to become very mature for their age. They take turns readily, are interested in others' experiences and look after one another automatically. Their role-play activity is first-rate because the resources provided encourage and stimulate lively speaking and listening. For example, the inspectors watched miscreants arrested by the 'police officers', handcuffed and placed in prison until they repented! Behaviour is extremely good. When three real police cars arrived for a visit, the children were fascinated but remained impeccably restrained. They are highly responsible. They use the swings without the need for constant surveillance, because they respect the guidelines they have been given. Parents agree. One wrote: 'My daughter has learnt to share and respect others and the Nursery rules in a way I never thought possible.'

Children enjoy adopting a healthy lifestyle. They continually keep fit in the many physical opportunities outside; they do their best to eat sensibly, although not all relish celery as a mid-morning snack. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Children acquire considerable, albeit quiet, self-confidence. They know exactly what is right and what is wrong, and their sense of wonder is constantly heightened by experiences like erupting volcanoes in the sandpit. They all join in everything very willingly and are ready to chip in with their own ideas and comments. Their many skills prepare them extremely well for their next school.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 1

Pupils learn outstandingly well because of excellent teaching and a rich, varied curriculum indoors and outside. All staff establish such a relaxed yet highly focused learning environment that children are always eager to learn. Sensitive but searching questions ensure that children of all abilities understand new learning at their level. Activities have a high level of challenge, because staff's planning is skilfully based on children's prior learning and individual needs; day-to-day assessment is very thorough. Staff also closely monitor children's progress over time, to make sure that they are all doing the best they can. Staff know just how children of this age learn. They provide the right balance of guidance and scope for independent learning. Actual teaching is so subtle that children are scarcely aware that it enables them quickly to appreciate new skills and concepts. The gentle, encouraging guidance from staff stimulates children's creativity and accelerates progress.

Children benefit from an extensive and fascinating range of experiences; parents regard them as 'fabulous'. There is a strong focus on basic skills; subjects naturally overlap, almost always involving language and social skills. For example, when designing pictures using two-dimensional

shapes, children were expected to strengthen their 'technical' vocabulary through discussion with an adult. The integrated provision for information and communication technology, for example, has resulted in the ICT Mark and Naacemark awards. The extremely good resources and spacious accommodation motivate pupils to acquire many skills. Outdoors, a pirate ship helps children to dream up adventures and try 'walking the plank'; a reading hut offers a quiet spot for enjoying stories. Indoors, the sensory corner is available as an oasis for contemplation and provide scope for exploring texture. Accurately tailored opportunities are provided for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are more capable.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 1

Parents are rightly appreciative of the excellent care provided for their children. This is ever-present, but very carefully managed so that it is not oppressive nor suppressive of children's natural curiosity and sense of individual responsibility. For example, when they explored how cars work, they were able to open and close the doors and try all the switches without fear, and without fear of restriction. Staff know all children extremely well and compile extensive records. Very close links with families mean that any issues arising are swiftly dealt with. Links with external agencies are extensive and vital in helping to meet the needs of the more vulnerable children. The procedures for safeguarding children meet requirements and all the school's systems are very rigorous. Risk assessments are not just regular but details are made available to staff in every room. Every single adult is suitably vetted; the premises are secure.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership of the school is excellent at all levels. The vision and the driving force of the headteacher provide considerable quality and consistency in all that the school does, and ensure that it prospers year-after-year. She champions an excellent philosophy of education and successfully motivates all staff to share this. Teamwork is its essence. She also empowers all her staff to contribute fully to the school and its development. This is especially true of the recently appointed assistant headteacher who has already been influential in initiating new approaches to education, for example, in physical movement.

The governing body is outstanding. Governors are very committed and shrewd in their understanding of the school. They bring their own expertise. The open atmosphere in the school promotes fruitful and honest debate; governors are comfortable about challenging the school, if appropriate.

The school promotes community cohesion well and evaluates thoroughly the impact this has on the children. The unity, harmony and lack of barriers within school lead to impressive social interaction. Links with the local community are mutually beneficial: for example, the local emergency services provide a valuable understanding of civic issues and road safety; children even act out shopping in local shops! The school is aware, though, that it could do more to promote children's involvement in and understanding of the wider world.

Self-evaluation is extremely accurate and effective. The school knows all its strengths and exactly how it can improve. The leadership is far from complacent and has done extremely well to maintain the school's excellent qualities from the previous inspection. It is happy to embrace

new ideas; for example, it has seen clear benefits from new language enrichment activities. As a result, it is an excellent position to develop even further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

| | |
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| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 1 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being? | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 1 |
| The standards[1] reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 1 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 1 |
| How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted? | 1 |

Leadership and management

| | |
|--|-----|
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 1 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 1 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

15 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Seaham Harbour Nursery School, Durham, SR7 7NN

I am writing to thank you for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your school recently. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with you and appreciated all that you said to me. You helped me to understand your school very well.

I can tell you that your nursery is an outstanding school. You do extremely well in your learning because the teachers and all the staff are excellent in making all the activities very exciting and at just the right level for you. You make excellent progress in all your learning, especially in your language and personal development. Your behaviour is impressive, as is your enthusiasm for work. You listen so well and enjoy all that you do, and are not afraid to find things out for yourselves. You are very kind to one another and to the adults.

The grown ups take excellent care of you. They make sure that you are doing your best and that you are safe at all times. They also work really well with your parents to solve any problems that you might have. As a result, you are very responsible. I thought it was great that you could be trusted to go on the swings all by yourselves.

All this does not happen by accident. Mrs Scott knows exactly what you need to make your year in Nursery interesting and successful. She and all the staff and governors work very hard to make school just right for you. You have an outstanding start to your school life.

There is only one thing that your school could do even better. Although you know a lot about your school and Seaham, I would like the school to introduce you more to the big, wide, exciting world beyond. I know you would enjoy that and hope that you will continue to love your learning as much as you do now.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Scott

Lead inspector