

Marsh Hill Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103126
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308228
Inspection date	23 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Hazel Callaghan

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Lowe
Headteacher	Helen Masaun
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	275 Marsh Hill Erdington Birmingham B23 7HG
Telephone number	01214 643090
Fax number	01214 646982

Age group	3-4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- confirm standards and achievement across different areas of learning and for different groups, especially those with English as an additional language, learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more able
- explore with staff how observations of children at work and other assessments are used to identify the next steps in learning and inform planning
- explore the impact of changes in the senior leadership team and the leadership of new initiatives on promoting school effectiveness and improvement of children's learning.

Evidence gathered from the school's assessments of children's work and progress were analysed. Discussions took place with senior leaders, the speech therapist, other staff and children. Parents' responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were analysed. The inspector considered the quality of school self-evaluation and the impact of recent initiatives. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Marsh Hill is a small Nursery that provides part-time education for most of its children, with a small proportion staying at the Nursery all day. Just over half of the children come from White British backgrounds and the rest come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. About a third of the children are in the early stages of learning English. The majority of the children start at the Nursery with a more narrow range of experiences and knowledge than is usual and almost a third of the children have speech and language difficulties. The headteacher is currently working part-time and is sharing the responsibilities of headship with the deputy headteacher. The school has achieved the Effective Early Learning Award for the last three years and the Investors in Children Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Marsh Hill Nursery is a good school with many outstanding features. At its heart is the staff's dedication to meeting the personal and learning needs of all children. The levels of care, support and guidance provided are excellent. One parent's comments were typical of many when saying, 'You can certainly tell that all the staff are passionate and enthusiastic about what they do and that they believe that every child is important.' Children consequently feel safe and secure and grow in confidence. They make good progress in their personal development and in their learning because teaching is good and children want to come to school.

The Nursery provides a rich learning environment in which children flourish. The curriculum is exceedingly well adapted to meet children's various learning needs and good levels of support are provided so that all are able to access the wide range of opportunities provided. All staff monitor children's progress well and this is used to plan activities and ensures the momentum of learning is maintained. Children reach standards that are above those expected in many areas. Children make particularly good progress in the development of their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their personal development. Teachers are skilled at responding to children's own interests. They develop their skills effectively through teacher-led activities and through the provision of opportunities for children to experiment and explore for themselves. A visit to a Sea Life Centre, for example, was used very well to stimulate children's interest and motivation. As a result, it was the children who decided what it was they wanted to do and what they wanted to learn. The teachers then ensured that these activities were the stimulus for good skills' development.

Teaching in both classes is good. The staff understand how children learn and use this understanding well. The outside areas are used frequently for a wide variety of exciting activities. However, children do not have the opportunity of making the choice of working either inside or outside the classroom on a daily basis. This is a missed opportunity for those who work best in the open air. There are few opportunities for children to benefit from the expertise of both teachers, or of working with children in the other class. The staff have identified the benefits of increasing these opportunities and are discussing ways of overcoming the difficulties of extending the provision. Children's enjoyment in their work, however, is extremely good and this, along with above-average standards, prepares them well for their next stages of learning.

Another outstanding feature of the Nursery is its partnership with parents and its cooperation with a wide range of agencies to support both families and children. The school has recently employed the support of the speech and language service to extend further the staff expertise in working with children who have a narrow range of language, or who have difficulty in listening and in communicating their ideas. This initiative is working very well and systems are being effectively developed to promote children's good progress. Tremendous effort is put into supporting families as staff recognise this ensures support for children as well. Strategies to support children in the early stages of learning English are good. Both parents and children are effectively supported by bilingual staff. Parents feel more confident to explain their concerns and difficulties in their own language, and children are comforted by hearing their first language spoken when they feel unsure. These good levels of support and the many other aspects of the Nursery provision, such as the promotion of children's physical development, are led well by staff at all levels. Governors are highly supportive of initiatives that will extend the expertise of staff and will further support the learning of all children. Good financial management has

enabled the school to fund a class for younger children, who benefit from an early start to school, and to employ the additional services of the speech and language therapist.

The headteacher provides a strong direction for the development of the school and she has been the stimulus for many of its outstanding features. Her vision has driven changes but it is the strong teamwork and commitment of all staff that have enabled the school to make good improvement. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together sharing the responsibility of headship. Their different, but complementary skills ensure that the school continues to move forward successfully. The staff are extremely evaluative and take great care to analyse information about children's progress and to research the patterns in their learning. This enables them to identify securely the strengths and potential weaknesses in the provision. This process has resulted in the school making good improvement since the last inspection and demonstrates its strong capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

As a nursery school, the Foundation Stage is covered by the Overall Effectiveness section above.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consider how the school building can be adapted so children share the staff expertise and all benefit from the strengths of teaching in each class, both inside and out.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Marsh Hill Nursery School, Erdington, B23 7HG

I am writing to say how much we enjoyed visiting your school recently. We loved your pink castle and were pleased that you were having so much fun. I thought you would like to know what we found out about your Nursery.

What we found out;

- We agree with your parents, who wrote to us saying that you have a good school and that it looks after you extremely well.
- You make good progress in your work and often reach standards of work that are better than for other children of your age.
- Teaching is good and all the adults help you to develop new skills and find out lots of new things.
- You really enjoy your work and make some really good suggestions about what resources you want to use and what you should be learning about next.
- You play together sensibly and try hard.
- All the adults in the Nursery work well together to make your activities lots of fun so you want to learn.
- All the adults are helping to make the Nursery better and better.

What we have asked the staff and governors to do to make the Nursery even better;

- We have asked the headteacher and governors to find ways for you to work with all the staff and to have more opportunities to work outside as well as in the classrooms.

Thank you for making our visit such a happy time.

Best wishes Hazel Callaghan Lead inspector