

Rainhill Community Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131447
Local Authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	341143
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Amy Bradley
Headteacher	Mrs Mavis Smith
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed all staff teaching and all children learning during the morning and afternoon sessions over the two days. They observed the school's work, and looked at policies, procedures and other documentation, including those relating to safeguarding, children's progress, checks on the quality of provision and improvement planning. Discussions were held with staff, parents and carers and the chair of governors. The inspectors analysed 47 parents and carers questionnaire responses.

- the quality of learning and support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and how well these children progress in all areas of their learning
- the effectiveness of outdoor provision in promoting all aspects of children's learning, especially that of boys in their language development and in enhancing their problem solving and numeracy skills

the effectiveness of assessment systems in helping staff to raise attainment, accelerate progress and to involve parents and carers in their children's learning

- the effectiveness of arrangements to lead and manage the school during the headteacher's secondment
- how effective governors are in challenging the school's performance and monitoring its provision.

Information about the school

The children who attend this average size Nursery school are predominantly of White British heritage. Very small numbers of children speak English as an additional language. A comparatively low proportion has special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is a Phase 2 children's centre which shares the site but which was not the subject of this inspection. The governing body manages 8am to 4.30pm wraparound care which consists of breakfast, lunch and after-school clubs, in addition to morning and afternoon teaching for separate cohorts of children. Currently, the headteacher is seconded to the local authority for the equivalent of three days a week. In her absence the senior teacher leads the school. During the inspection, building work was in progress to extend the outdoor play and learning area.

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 is an outstanding Nursery. It provides exceptional care and support for children and promotes high quality learning in a richly stimulating environment. Leaders and managers are highly successful in enabling staff to meet the high standards set, in constantly improving provision and in establishing very strong links with a range of partners. Parents and carers are full of praise for and highly supportive of the school. Their views are typified in the following comment, 'I really couldn't be happier with Rainhill Nursery. I feel that the staff have created a comfortable and very stimulating environment for the children to experience and my child is thriving there.'

From the moment the children arrive in the setting they busy themselves with purposeful activity. Children learn very effectively through activities which they choose or initiate for themselves. They are very skilfully supported and guided in their learning by experienced and knowledgeable staff. Day-to-day progress is observed and noted so that the next steps in learning can be identified and systematically planned for. Children's progress is comprehensively recorded in individual learning journals to which parents and carers have access during the school day. This provides them with detailed up-to-date information about all aspects of their children's learning and development. The school acknowledges that providing a means for parents and carers to make a written comment and recording the date on which they read their children's journal, would enhance the partnership between home and school further.

Overall, leaders and managers keep a vigilant eye on all aspects of the Nursery's work. They know the school well as a result of robust monitoring. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate, albeit overly self-critical in its view of the effectiveness of many aspects of the school's work. This illustrates the lack of complacency and constant drive for improvement, evident in the work of all staff. Very good improvements made since the last inspection have raised the school's overall effectiveness from good to outstanding. Governance is good, but currently too few governors gain a first-hand knowledge and understanding of the Nursery's provision and practice, by spending time observing staff teaching and children learning. This limits their ability to fully challenge the school's work. Despite this, the significant improvements made since the last inspection, the high standards of learning and excellent provision, together with children's excellent progress which enables them to attain at above expectations, indicate that there is an excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To enable governors to better fulfil their role as critical friends, by:

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- encouraging more of them to spend time in the Nursery informing themselves of the quality of provision.
- Enhance the already excellent engagement of parents and carers, by:
 - providing a means for parents and carers to comment on and date what they have read in their children's learning journals.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**1**

Children enter the Nursery with equal proportions attaining at below or in line with the expectation for age. They make excellent progress and attain above expected skills in most areas of learning by the time they leave to join Reception classes in local primary schools. Their personal, social and emotional development and their physical development are particularly strong. Children who enter the school two terms earlier than is the norm make the same excellent progress as other children. The extra time they spend in the Nursery and the highly effective support they receive, enable them to catch up and overcome any significant barriers to their learning or development. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities thrive and make the same rapid progress as their peers because their needs are identified accurately and catered for sensitively and very successfully. The more-able children also make excellent progress and attain highly as a result of effective challenge and stimulating provision. Equally good progress is made by those very few children who speak English as an additional language. Typically children learn and play cooperatively, individually, happily and confidently.

Children's behaviour is exemplary; they are very supportive of each other and are keen to involve each other in their activities. They love dressing up and acting out roles, work with close concentration on construction tasks and thoroughly enjoy recording their thoughts through speaking and mark-making. The most able children are already writing sentences in full, using their excellent knowledge of letter sounds to spell words correctly, and naming three-dimensional shapes such as cuboids and cylinders. Children develop sensible eating habits and pay close attention to good hygiene. They move between the indoor and outdoor classrooms sensibly to follow their interests. Boys particularly enjoy and learn well from more physical activities outside. Their interest in writing and their ability to problem solve and learn more about number, have been considerably enhanced as a result of the staff's guidance and encouragement for them to learn more outside. Children develop a very good feeling for what is right and wrong, show a keen sense of curiosity in the natural world and are budding recyclers. They are very accepting of others and have a developing awareness of different cultures. By 'signing themselves in' on entry to sessions they gain an early sense of the importance of regular attendance and promptness.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

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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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Children's attainment ¹	2
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	1
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?

The highly skilled way in which staff promote learning contributes very significantly to children's excellent progress. As soon as they arrive, adults ensure that children receive support and guidance where necessary. They constantly record assessments of children's learning and use the information very effectively to plan the next steps for each child. They very skilfully promote their language development through extended conversation and open-ended questions. Staff subtly ensure that children do not spend too long on one activity, at the same time allowing them to follow their interests and to initiate or extend activities. They cleverly use opportunities to prompt learning, for example, taking advantage of the building work that was going on during the inspection. Children were naturally intrigued by the earth moving machinery and staff encouraged them to talk and write about what they saw and asked them to design equipment that they would like in the completed new outdoor area. The presence of potentially dangerous equipment and of people the children did not know also provided opportunities for the staff to emphasise safety procedures to which the children responded robustly and sensibly.

Children have a wealth of rich experiences which promote many aspects of their learning. Very effective partnerships with local schools, public services and with external support agencies enhance children's personal, emotional, health and social development. Visits by representatives from minority ethnic communities give children an insight into the traditions, foods, music and dance of cultures other than their own. The quality of care is superb, a judgement fully endorsed by parents. This means that

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children feel very safe and comfortable in their surroundings. The high quality accommodation and resources adds considerably to the children's learning.

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?

Testament to the efficiency of management and to excellent shared leadership, is how smoothly the school is running and how uninterrupted is the drive for improvement during the headteacher's secondment. The senior teacher and the rest of the staff have ensured that high quality is maintained, under the overall expert guidance of the very able headteacher. Rigorous checks on the quality of provision are on-going and where any relative shortcomings are spotted swift and effective action is taken to improve matters. Telling examples are the greater emphasis on encouraging boys to combine play outdoors with the development of their writing and numeracy skills, and the successful drive for all staff to use more open-ended questions when talking with children.

Staff appreciate the many opportunities for professional development through training and mentoring. Several have also revelled in being given extra responsibility as key workers (adults who take particular responsibility for the pastoral and learning needs of about 12 children and who liaise closely with the children's parents and carers). Governors support the school effectively, especially in providing relevant expertise and in regularly attending meetings. They also ensure that safeguarding requirements are fully met and that practice goes beyond the excellent policies and procedures in evidence. Some, however, do not avail themselves of the opportunities to gain first-hand knowledge of provision.

Many parents and carers find invaluable the support the school's management provides for them and their children. They very much appreciate the regular and extensive information they receive about how their children are getting on or how they can contribute to their child's learning and development. For example, the individual educational plans devised for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities not only identify when and the ways in which parents and carers will review their children's progress, but also how they can employ strategies at home that are also used in school to support their child.

The Nursery is a harmonious and highly inclusive community in which all are treated

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equally according to their needs. The great success the school has in ensuring that all children make outstanding progress is testament to its determination to eliminate any discrimination. The Nursery promotes community cohesion well, especially within the school and in the local community. High quality provision, excellent outcomes for children, very effective partnerships and inspired leadership, all contribute to outstanding value for money.

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	1
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

The completion of 47 questionnaires represented about a 60% return. Parents and carers also expressed their views in the two meetings held with inspectors. Parents and carers comments/responses are overwhelmingly positive.

They are particularly complimentary about:

- how much their children enjoy school and how safe they feel
- how well the school is led and managed.

Two questionnaires identified two separate concerns amongst an otherwise positive response. One was about how well the school has responded to a concern and the other was disappointed that the request to extend the after-school club hours was turned down. These issues were followed up by inspectors and duly noted by the school. Inspectors found that the school did all it could to accommodate parents and carers and that it was not financially viable to fund the after-school club beyond its existing hours.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rainhill Community Nursery 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 78 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	81	8	17	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	94	3	6	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	34	72	13	28	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	74	12	26	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	74	12	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	74	11	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	81	9	19	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)	29	62	16	34	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	77	11	23	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	70	10	21	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	68	13	28	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	81	8	17	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	87	6	13	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.



Dear Children

What a delight it was for me to visit your Nursery for two days to see how you were all getting on with your learning. I did enjoy watching you play and do so many interesting things. I was very impressed with how well you played together, listened so well to the adults and each other and by how much you enjoyed your mornings or afternoons.

Your Nursery is super – grown-ups call it outstanding – and you have such lovely areas in which to play and learn and very exciting things to play with. I think that when the diggers go away and the men finish the outside area you will have even more exciting things to do. You are taught and looked after so well so that you are happy and learn so many good things. The people who run the Nursery do a really good job and your parents and carers very happy with how well you get on.

During my visit I saw two things that might make the Nursery even better for you. So Mrs Smith and I have agreed that:

- your parents and carers will be able to write what they think about your journals when they look at them
- that some governors- they are the people who help to run the school- come in to the Nursery more often to see what happens there.

I hope that you all enjoy ther rest of your time in the Nursery and I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

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