

Kendal Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112091
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	378420
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2012
Lead inspector	Gillian Salter-Smith

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	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vivien Kincey
Headteacher	Veronica Broyd
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Gillian Salter-Smith

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed two teachers, five support assistants, a trainee teacher and a number of volunteers working with children at play and learning both indoors and outdoors over a total period of around six hours. The inspector talked to parents and carers as they brought their children into school, and with a small group of children about their 'Special Books' that record their learning. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and the local authority general adviser. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at documentation. This included the school development plan, the school self-evaluation document, data on children's progress, minutes of governing body meetings and records of monitoring by staff and the governing body. Questionnaires received from 37 parents and carers were analysed in addition to those received from staff and children.

Information about the school

The school has more children on roll than many other nursery schools. The children come from a wide range of social backgrounds. The vast majority of children are of White British heritage. Nearly all of the very small number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds speak English as their first language. A small proportion of children are disabled or have special educational needs. The school has Healthy School status.

The governing body is responsible for Brantfield Quality Care, which provides childcare on the school site. This provision was inspected in 2008 and is not due for re-inspection. It did not form part of this inspection.

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	1
Achievement of children	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of children	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. Highly skilled teaching within an exceptionally stimulating environment is underpinned by a shared philosophy. Children are highly valued and enabled to pursue their own interests. They grow in confidence and are imaginative, creative and independent. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work. Comments typical of many are, 'I have been incredibly impressed by the opportunities and activities provided for my children', and 'My child has developed immensely in confidence and imaginative play and become more independent and resourceful.'
- Achievement is outstanding. Children learn and develop at a rapid and sustained rate. They make outstanding progress in all areas of learning.
- Staff know every child very well and ensure each child is skilfully guided, challenged and supported. Constant observation and assessment of children's development informs teachers' planning. Children's achievement across all areas of learning is recorded in detailed 'Special Books' and these are highly valued by children and their parents and carers. They are not yet consistent in setting out clearly progression in all areas of learning or in setting out the next steps in learning.
- Children love going to school. They are settled and secure and their behaviour is impressive. They particularly enjoy being outdoors in the excellent garden and 'Wild Side', a wilder and even more natural area.
- The headteacher, staff and the governing body are an exceptionally strong team. There is no complacency; professional development and rigorous performance management are constantly focused on improving children's learning and result in high-quality teaching. The school works effectively with parents and carers in supporting their children's learning. For example, story sacks with books and a variety of activities are provided to support learning at home. However, the extent to which these are used is not monitored closely.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Bring greater consistency to the record of children's learning in their 'Special Books' so that progress and the next steps to be taken in every area of learning are made clear to parents and carers.
- Check how often story sacks are being used in order to support continued learning at home.

Main Report

Achievement of children

Children thrive in an exciting environment. Parents and carers are accurate in their highly positive views of children's progress. Overall, the level of skill and development when children start in the nursery school is below that typical for their age. From their varying starting points, children make outstanding progress. By the time children move to the Reception Year the vast majority show skills and development in advance of those expected for their age in all areas of learning.

Children settle quickly into daily routines and are keen to be busy. They sustain concentration exceptionally well, seeing through activities they choose to do. Children were thoroughly absorbed in building space ships from plastic bricks, and enjoyed talking about them to adults. They develop great self-confidence through the encouragement to try new things and the well deserved praise they constantly receive from adults.

Children's enjoyment of the extensive outdoor garden and the Wild Side is exceptional. They delight in physical challenges and the excitement of overcoming a steep hill and then sliding down a muddy bank in the Wild Side. Adults talk with the children about these activities and new language abounds. Children are happy and confident in exploring and playing in the extensive garden. They use their imaginations extensively, for example, when playing in the boat, by saying that a stick is the mast and by deciding where they can sleep on the boat when they go on a journey.

Children make excellent progress in developing communication, reading and writing skills. Adults continually encourage them to talk about what they are doing and children enjoy taking on different roles and acting out their parts. They enjoyed planning a party for the 'princesses' in the role play area, spending a considerable period planning and trying out 'recipes'.

The children who attend the nursery over four and five terms often reach levels of development well in advance of their age. They use their understanding of letters and sounds to read and spell. They form letters well and write words that show the beginnings of clear sentence structure.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are especially well supported and make outstanding progress. Needs are identified quickly and the school is relentless in pursuit of the support children need.

The school identified that, previously, some boys did not make enough progress in reading and writing. Currently, boys and girls make equally outstanding progress as a result of far more opportunities for them to follow interests that stimulate them to talk and write, and the use of exciting stories and drama related to their interests. Previous weaker performance in problem solving, reasoning and number is no longer evident as a result of making the most of every opportunity to develop children's mathematical skills in the activities they pursue. 'Blast off' for the rockets provided an excellent opportunity to recognise numbers for counting down from 10. More-able children are well known to staff and are constantly challenged, for example, in a singing game where they carried out addition and subtraction when deciding whether there were enough children to play the game.

Quality of teaching

Staff have high levels of expertise in how children of this age learn and develop. At the heart of excellent curriculum planning is the recognition that children make most progress when they pursue activities that interest and excite them. Staff are highly skilled at providing a stimulating environment, both indoors and outdoors, that makes the most of children's interests. They enable children to enjoy what they are doing immensely, developing self-confidence alongside a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding across all areas of learning.

The outdoor garden, including the Wild Side, is used exceptionally well by staff to encourage children to pursue their interests, challenge themselves and to develop their independence. In an excellent session, staff carefully built on children's excitement about finding natural creatures, such as a live bee, a worm and a centipede. Children developed new language, recorded what they had found and used books to find out more. Teaching and the planned curriculum contribute very well indeed to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Staff know all the children very well indeed so that they seamlessly provide challenge for more-able children and support those who need additional help. Detailed individual learning plans guide adult support for children identified as disabled and those with special educational needs so that they make similarly outstanding progress and, increasingly, interact well with adults and other children. Key adults record every child's learning in their 'Special Book'. These are highly valued by children, parents and carers. The school is aware that there is some inconsistency in how well progress is recorded across all areas of learning and what the next steps in learning should be. Parents' and carers' views on the quality of teaching are highly positive. The small number of questionnaires completed by children with the help of their parents and carers are also very positive. Inspection evidence supports these views.

Behaviour and safety of children

Behaviour is outstanding. Children love coming to school. As one parent put it, 'Saturdays can be difficult, when he realises that he can't go to school!' Their behaviour and conduct are impressive. They enjoy being in the classroom and the outdoors enormously. They collaborate exceptionally well with each other and share and take turns happily. They know the routines well and unfailingly seek protective clothing when playing in the water, preparing to bake or for any other messy activity. They form good friendships which they enjoy and value. They become independent, learning to take decisions about what they will do. They are confident in exploring the extensive outdoor area and know how to keep themselves safe. They are very used to assessing risk, such as how to go up the wooden steps carefully when they are wet. Children conduct themselves very safely in the indoor environment, negotiating staircases sensibly. They are sensitive to each other's needs, helping one another, for example when balancing along the wooden posts in the garden. There is no bullying and staff are quick to help children to be friends again when there are very occasional upsets between individuals.

Attendance is good. The school pursues any drop in attendance rigorously, encouraging parents and carers to recognise the value of regular attendance for their child. Parents and carers are very happy that the school keeps their children safe and that behaviour is at least good. The questionnaires completed by children confirm these views.

Leadership and management

The headteacher sets high expectations and ensures that staff are up-to-date with developments in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff and the governing body are ambitious for the school. Secure self-evaluation, based on rigorous monitoring of progress, and the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum, has ensured that the right priorities are identified and pursued relentlessly. Tightly focused professional development for all staff, including plenty of shared best practice, is linked to robust performance management arrangements. This has led to improvements in the curriculum, teaching and achievement. The school does not tolerate any form of discrimination and the constant pursuit of equality of opportunity has resulted in identified gaps being closed, notably in reading and writing for boys. Improvements in all areas of the school since the previous inspection demonstrate a secure capacity to improve further.

The carefully planned curriculum meets children's needs and is outstanding in promoting children's well-being alongside rapid development in all areas of learning. The impact on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements. Child protection policies, procedures and training are robust.

The school engages exceptionally well with parents and carers and many appreciate how accessible and communicative the staff are. However, the school recognises that it does not keep a close check on how well the carefully produced story sacks are used by parents and carers to encourage home-learning. The school works well with

the local children's centre and is increasingly finding ways to develop community use of the school's facilities.

The governing body is highly rigorous in holding leaders to account for the performance of the school. Members contribute robustly to monitoring and evaluation. They are highly proactive, not only in supporting the day-to-day life of the school but in seeking longer-term strategic improvements, for example, in raising the number on roll and working more closely with the local community.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the child's work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the children's attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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 March 2012

Dear Children

Inspection of Kendal Nursery School, Kendal, LA9 4PH

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to your school. You know, I now understand why so many of you skip up the drive and have big smiles on your faces when you arrive at school. There is so much to do and enjoy in your school! The classrooms are full of exciting activities and the garden and Wild Side are amazing with the deep dark cave, the boat to sail away in, the sandy beach, the huts where you sit and enjoy a book, the bushes that are just great to hide in, and the steep hills and muddy slides! I wished I had overalls on and sensible wellingtons like yourselves, when I was there, then I too could have enjoyed sliding down the muddy hill!

Your school is so good that I can say that it is 'outstanding'. That means it is one of the best in the whole of England! Your teachers and all the adults do so much to help you to enjoy school. They make sure that you find activities which you like doing and that you try lots of new things so by the time it comes to going to a new school you are confident and ready to learn more.

Your headteacher is keen to make your school even better. I have asked her to make your 'Special Books' even more special for every one of you by showing how well you have done in all your activities. I have asked her to make sure that your teachers know how often you have used the really exciting story sacks to help you carry on enjoying books at home.

You can help by carrying on enjoying all that you can do in school. You are a real credit to your school and your families. Your behaviour is excellent and you are considerate and kind towards others. Well done!

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith
Lead inspector

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