

Gloucester Nursery School and Childrens Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121785
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	359084
Inspection dates	28–29 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Georgina Beasley

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	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Jones
Headteacher	Julia Mann
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2008
School address	Camborne Close Delapre, Northampton NN4 8PH
Telephone number	01604 762251
Fax number	01604 762251
Email address	head@gloucester.northants-ecl.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Three free-flow learning sessions and eight key worker groups were observed and eight practitioners were seen. Inspectors held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, and parents and carers. They observed the nursery's work, and looked at assessment information, children's learning journeys, displays and a range of policies and procedural documents. Inspectors received and analysed 65 questionnaires from parents and carers and eight from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How much progress do children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make as a result of the nursery's provision and support?
- To what extent does the quality of learning improve when the children work in small groups with an adult on a focused activity?
- How effectively does the nursery assess children's potential and plan learning that accelerates their progress?
- How well does the nursery evaluate its work, plan improvement priorities and measure whether these have been and are being achieved?

Information about the school

The large majority of children who attend this larger-than-average nursery school are from White British backgrounds. A small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds. An average number of children speak English as an additional language. An average proportion has special educational needs and/or disabilities. An above average proportion has a statement of special educational needs for more complex learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities. The nursery runs a breakfast, lunch and tea club every day. The nursery has an Inclusion Quality Mark Award for its work in ensuring every child is involved in all activities. An International Schools Award was received recently for developing links with Poland and New York City.

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

Gloucester Nursery School is outstanding. Children's behaviour is exemplary. Children start to learn from the minute they step through the door. The two and a half hours of learning time during each session are extremely well organised so that the children can choose what and where to learn while receiving high-quality support and guidance from adults. During this free-flow learning time, adults' focused interventions are led by an exceptionally well-planned personal learning journey for each child, based on detailed assessments of their learning. As one parent said, 'The nursery provides a nurturing environment that is continually stimulating and where children have great fun.'

The learning and progress of every child regardless of their circumstances or ability, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are consistently outstanding. The nursery prepares the children extremely well for school. Children's achievement is excellent. Nearly all reach the expected levels and a large majority achieve above the expected levels for their age by the time they leave the nursery. Children display high levels of independence during activities that they choose themselves. Behaviour is exceptionally good with excellent levels of cooperation and sustained concentration on play and learning. Adults do not always allow children the same level of independence when they learn in small groups on targeted skills and knowledge. The increased adult direction during these activities reduces the amount of time for children to learn and so learning is good rather than outstanding at these times.

Parents and carers are fully involved in their children's learning. Many stay at the start of nursery to enjoy stories with their children, to talk about how much the recently hatched chicks have grown or to help their children to choose books from the extensive library. Displays explain the learning journey of each activity through drawings and photographs, and the comments of staff and children detail how the children's differing knowledge and skills have developed over time. This helps parents and carers learn how their children learn, and enables them to support learning at home.

Safeguarding arrangements are good and ensure children's day-to-day well-being. Staff follow procedures diligently to ensure the children's safety. The governing body is fairly new due to the constant turnover of its members. Established systems ensure members' full involvement in evaluating the nursery's work and enable it to support and challenge the leadership to explain its decisions. It still relies on the leadership of the headteacher to ensure that all policies and procedures are reviewed vigorously.

The nursery has excellent capacity to improve. The headteacher leads by example, constantly inspiring and challenging staff to think of even more interesting ways to promote the children's learning. The nursery's self-evaluation processes are highly effective and, as a result of well-targeted actions, it has improved all aspects of its work since the previous inspection. The teacher responsible for leading teaching and learning

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ensures high-quality monitoring by all staff to ensure children reach their potential. Daily assessments are reviewed and used as a basis for planning further learning opportunities. Themes through which the children learn are carefully chosen to inspire both boys and girls. Activities intrigue the children and build a strong sense of inquisitiveness, reflected in the questions they ask about what is happening and why. Activities often include the children's ideas and always respond to their personal circumstances, such as the arrival of a new baby brother or sister. As a result, learning is fun and the children always want to learn more.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build the expertise of the governing body so that all members are involved in vigorously and independently monitoring the work of the nursery.
- Increase the pace of learning when children learn in small groups on a focused activity.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

The children enjoy nursery greatly. This is reflected in the confident way that they separate from their parents and carers and how quickly they start learning. Many find their friends and start to plan their learning the minute they enter the building. As a result of the children's enthusiasm for learning and the high-quality support from adults, all children make excellent progress and are prepared for their next stage of education extremely well.

The children are inquisitive learners especially in the free-flow learning time when they decide what and where to learn. They ask questions about what is happening and why. For example, one boy wanted to know why the chick was stretching out its wing while another asked, 'Can you see the shell cracking?' when watching a chick hatch out of its egg. When children work with an adult in small groups on a focused task, learning is good but not outstanding. Adults sometimes manage the children's activity too tightly which reduces the amount of learning time.

The children feel safe at nursery. They confidently approach an adult for help with a particularly difficult task or to find a particular toy or resource. They use the space outside with excellent thought to their own and others' safety when riding the trikes, climbing the equipment or enjoying a hide-and-chase game with their friends. The children take great care of the nursery environment, resources and toys. Everyone is busy during tidy-up time. They get involved in the immediate community through raising money for local charities, sending Christmas cards to neighbourhood homes and by taking part in the community carnival.

The children have high levels of independence. Their self-care skills are excellent. They all wash hands without reminders before preparing their own snack, and after messy play or going to the toilet. The children's comments about their learning show that they know that 'bananas are good for you', even though they admit to liking 'chocolate and ice cream' as well. Children choose when to have a snack, which they prepare independently. Snack time is always a learning time. For example, the children discussed the shape of crackers and cucumber, and counted out five grapes to match the pictures on a placemat before eating them.

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These are the grades for children's outcomes

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	1
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Extremely well-focused support and guidance during the children's learning time result in targeted teaching and the extension of learning from each child's starting point. Excellent opportunities exist for the children to show what they can do and so reach their potential. Adults ask a range of questions that structure learning and help children to speak their thinking out loud. This in turn helps them to find solutions to a problem or to understand what is happening and why. Adults give detailed feedback when children have achieved something new or remembered to use previous learning. Not only do adults tell the children what they have achieved but also what they did that shows that they have achieved it. Steps are taken to ensure every child takes part in all activities. This includes the visit to Forest School activities, a challenge to children with physical disabilities but who, nevertheless, are enabled to attend.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given innovative ways to explore the environment and to learn in different ways. For example, a dance routine developed children's understanding of how to make top to bottom and left-to-right straight-line movements, and clockwise and anti-clockwise circle movements to help

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develop early writing skills. This targeted individual support enabled them to make excellent progress.

Outstanding care for children's health and personal well-being is reflected in the thoughtful way children spontaneously help each other out, whether this is helping to push a trike up the slope outside or finding room for all of the characters to hold the rope to pull up The Enormous Turnip when acting out the story. Every absence is checked and families given extra support if necessary to help get their children to nursery every day. First-aid procedures are robust and children's medical needs supported highly effectively.

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?

The headteacher gives very clear leadership that is constantly focused on improving children's outcomes. She is supported by all staff and, in particular, the teacher responsible for leading teaching and learning in ensuring assessment and planning processes are being as effective as they can be. A close analysis of assessment information identifies any gaps in individual children's achievement and in curriculum coverage. In response, adults give particular attention to identified children, and activities are planned to fill any gaps in learning. Daily evaluation meetings ensure subsequent detailed reviews of learning and the precise planning of each child's next learning steps. As a result of this focused monitoring, every child's progress is reviewed in detail at some stage and steps taken to ensure equal opportunity for success. Attainment information indicates no troughs or peaks in attainment with all aspects and areas of learning for all groups being at the same above expected levels.

There is always a constant turnover in membership of the governing body, especially parent representatives, because most of the children are only at the nursery for one year. About half of the governing body is new this year. There are effective systems in place that ensure the governing body fulfils its statutory duties well, and that it is fully involved in evaluating the work of the nursery and setting improvement priorities. As a result, it gives good support and challenge to the nursery's on-going development. On occasion, it still requires strong guidance from the school's leadership to ensure the systematic monitoring of some agreed procedures. Safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive. Staff work diligently to ensure procedures are followed consistently, especially those relating to the children's medical needs. Daily checks of the indoor and outdoor areas ensure all learning areas are safe.

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The nursery has numerous partnerships that make a significant contribution to the children's learning. Specialists support the learning and progress of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities extremely well through regular meetings with parents and carers and the nursery. Parents and carers are able to give their views through daily contact with their children's key worker, and to read and contribute to the assessments in their children's learning journey. In particular, parents and carers who have a child with special educational needs and/or disabilities feel personally supported through the advice and guidance they receive about how to help their child at home.

Staff strive to ensure the nursery is seen in a positive light in the local community. It has developed strong links with a family in Poland and a nursery school in New York City to broaden the children's first-hand knowledge and understanding of global communities. Members of the local community are regularly invited to nursery events. Children celebrate their own cultural diversity and that of others who live in the community through learning about special events such as Chinese New Year, and sharing snack foods from different countries.

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

A well-above-average proportion of questionnaires were received from parents and carers. Almost all reflected parents' and carers' high levels of satisfaction and overwhelmingly positive views of the nursery. Many recognise 'the great strides' children make in all aspects of their learning. The inspection endorses the positive responses. Parents and carers receive excellent opportunities to contribute to their children's learning and progress, and clear guidance about how they can support learning at home.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Gloucester Nursery School and Childrens Centre 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 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 99 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	80	12	18	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	53	82	11	17	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	41	63	23	35	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	68	19	29	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	48	74	16	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	72	17	26	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	80	13	20	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)	42	65	18	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	74	15	23	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	60	22	34	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	66	19	29	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	53	82	12	18	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	75	14	22	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 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



30 March 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Gloucester Nursery School and Children's Centre, Northampton, NN4 8PH

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your nursery recently and for inviting us to join in with your learning. We particularly enjoyed learning how to mix yellow and blue paints to make different shades of green and hunting for the giant's gold coins in the garden.

You have an excellent nursery. The adults help you to make excellent progress. You help with this too through the enthusiastic way you get involved in all of the activities and the way you remember to take care of your own needs. You look after the nursery and all of the toys extremely well. You all behave exceptionally well. We were impressed with the thoughtful way you helped each other out with difficult tasks and how well you played together sharing the toys and taking turns.

We have asked the nursery to improve two things. We have asked the people who support the adults who work in your nursery, called the governing body, to check more closely that everything is working properly. We have also asked that when you learn in small groups, you are given the chance to be as independent as you are at other times, so that you have more time to complete more activities and have even more fun during the sessions.

You can help by continuing to always do your best and to continue to enjoy your learning.

Thank you again for making us feel so welcome.

Yours sincerely

Georgina Beasley

Lead inspector

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