

The Limes Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108905
Local Authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	356448
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Christine Huard

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	2–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Joyce, Amy Boyd
Headteacher	Diana Weston
Date of previous school inspection	18 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Observations were made of small group activities, as well as the free-flow activities taking place both in and outdoors. Inspectors observed all the teachers and Early Years Practitioners assisting children in their learning. They spoke to parents and carers, and held meetings with members of the governing body, teachers and Early Years Practitioners. They discussed aspects of their work informally with many members of staff. They observed the Nursery's work in detail, and examined monitoring and assessment information, curriculum and development planning as well as monitoring records. Inspectors analysed 35 responses to questionnaires distributed to parents and carers and 15 returned by staff.

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

- The extent to which all groups of children are making progress in their learning now, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The success of strategies to improve behaviour and ensure that all children are able to access their learning without disruption.
- The success of strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure that all children are appropriately challenged or supported in their learning.
- How successfully the leadership has been able to raise morale, develop team spirit, and bring about change in order to raise the quality of provision for the children and thus enable them to make better progress.

Information about the school

The Limes Nursery School has 96 children attending, for a mixture of full- and part-time sessions. The school has a much higher proportion than usual of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Of these, pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties and those with moderate learning difficulties form the largest groups. Whilst most of the children are of White British heritage, there is a wide range of other cultures represented in the school. The school has an above average proportion of children who are at the very early stages of learning English. The headteacher was appointed in September 2010, and joint Chairpersons of the Governing Body took up their positions in November.

The Nursery suffered from a major flood in December which rendered much of the accommodation and resources unusable. Work is still being carried out to restore The House. Children are based in The Green Room, The Big Green Room and The Annexe. Children from the Big Green Room and the Annexe share an outside area. The youngest children have an outside area of their own. The school provides breakfast and after-school clubs. The children's centre based on site was not 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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Limes provides a good quality of education for its children. The good care, support and guidance and robust safeguarding arrangements ensure that children feel safe. Parents and carers are confident that their children enjoy their time at Nursery, 'My child is always eager to attend school and comes home happy,' wrote one. The good-quality teaching from all practitioners ensures that the children make good progress in both their learning and their personal development.

Teaching and the curriculum are good. Practitioners work very hard to ensure that children's interests are included in their planning. Themes and experiences motivate the children extremely well. This leads to children remaining on task and behaviour is good. The outdoor areas are used very well and reflect the good provision inside. Additional activities, such as the visit to the local gymnasium each week, considerably enhance the children's experiences.

Children achieve well. However, speaking and listening skills are a little slower to develop. Progress is sometimes less consistent in this area of learning because opportunities are occasionally missed to develop these skills effectively. Some practitioners do not always encourage children to develop their thinking and express themselves at length because they ask questions that only require a yes or no answer. In addition, questions are not always matched to the abilities of children so do not always support or challenge them sufficiently.

Children's learning diaries provide a good picture of their development across all areas of learning. All key workers make detailed observations of the learning of the children in their groups but shorter observations do not always indicate how children's learning could be further extended or supported. In addition, parents and carers do not have the opportunity to contribute to these diaries in order to celebrate children's achievements at home and how they could be extended at school. The tracking of the progress of different groups of children is at an early stage. Staff know how well different groups, for example, those at an early stage of learning English, are performing but the recording of this is only just being formally implemented so that any differences in performance can be easily identified and addressed.

Since the last inspection, the school has had a series of acting headteachers and so has suffered from a lack of focused leadership. This led to a lack of direction and consequently a lowering of staff morale. Strong leadership and management over the last year have seen the school return to its previous good standards. The governing body, under the outstanding leadership of the joint chairs, has been instrumental in re-establishing a whole-team ethos. Their decision to hold training, to redefine the values and ethos of the school, demonstrates their passion and commitment to the Nursery and the community it serves. The school knows how well it is doing and its self evaluation is accurate. With its

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strong leadership, dedication of the staff, and good improvements seen over the last year, the school has demonstrated it has good capacity to further improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve opportunities for children to improve their speaking and listening skills by:
 - asking more open ended questions
 - posing questions that are carefully matched to match children's understanding and abilities.
- Develop the recording and use of assessment by :
 - identifying the next steps of learning in learning diaries in order to aid planning
 - providing opportunities for parents and carers to contribute to learning diaries and thus celebrate children's achievements at home as well as at school.
- Ensure that the progress of all groups of children is recorded formally and kept centrally so that any differences in performance can be more easily identified and addressed.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

2

Children make good progress from starting points on entry that are generally below expectations for their age. Children enjoy their learning and this shows from the moment they enter school in the morning and quickly settle to one of the many early morning activities available to them. Welcome time is a lovely social occasion and children love, 'What's in the bag?' and respond enthusiastically to the activities available to them. Because they are interested in their learning, behaviour is good. The school has a few children who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour. Nevertheless, this is barely noticeable because of the consistency with which the staff manage any difficulties in order to ensure the learning of other children is not affected.

There is a strong focus on developing key literacy and numeracy skills and children have many opportunities to learn and discover for themselves. In one classroom, a beach had been created. This enabled children to find out for themselves the feeling and textures of wet and dry sand, discovering that they could mould wet sand but not dry because it 'just runs away'. A member of staff had brought some crabs into school earlier in the week and they had discovered many interesting facts about these small creatures. All groups of children make good progress. The high numbers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because the Inclusion Manager has good opportunities to work with key workers to ensure the best possible support is provided. Similarly, children who are at an early stage of speaking English develop language skills quickly because of the strategies adopted by staff to help them learn the essential words and phrases they will need.

Children have many opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles. The provision of a good range of outdoor toys, adventure equipment and visits to the local gymnasium all ensure they have plenty of exercise. School dinners are of good quality and take good account of special dietary needs and religious requirements. Children of all backgrounds and races

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are fully integrated and the nursery is a happy and harmonious environment in which to be.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Children's attainment ¹	2
The quality of children's learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
Children's behaviour	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Children's attendance ¹	3
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

Children are well motivated and interested in their learning. The use of boards in the classrooms where parents and carers or teachers can record children's interests are very useful. The information provided helps teachers and key workers to build in that something extra that is pertinent to particular individuals. There is a consistency of approach across all classes and teachers and key workers alike make learning exciting for the children. Children wait with bated breath and an expectant air as they sing, 'What's in the bag?' This daily ritual provides children with the information they have been waiting for about activities available to them. They listen carefully before scampering off to the activity of their choice.

A wide range of activities within half-termly themes ensure that the curriculum is good. It is broad and well balanced and there is a good balance of activities between those which children choose for themselves and those that are directed by adults. Teachers ensure that a range of activities are provided across a range of levels so that the needs and abilities of all children are catered for. The 'Fairy Tale Castle' provided a myriad of ideas

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for children to use their imaginations. Puppets, of princesses, dragons and other creatures, enable children to develop their creativity as well as their speaking and listening skills. However, practitioners sometimes miss opportunities to develop these because the questions they ask do not extend children's thinking sufficiently. The quill pens and sand trays enabled children to effectively develop their early mark making and writing skills.

Assessment is satisfactory. This is because learning diaries, whilst comprehensive do not provide as wide a picture of children's learning as they could. In addition, the assessment and tracking of the progress of different groups of children is still in its infancy.

The care and welfare of the children is of high priority. Support for those children whose circumstances have made them more vulnerable is particularly good. Although some equipment and resources are a little old, all are cared for well and clean. Breakfast and after-school clubs are well attended and children receive a healthy snack as part of the provision. Transition arrangements into and out of the Nursery school are good. The school has good relationships with the many primary schools to which children move. The school has a wide range of contacts and relationships with outside agencies which enable them to meet the needs not only of their children, but often their families as well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is very ambitious for the school. The last year has seen a great improvement in the provision made for the children because of the rigorous monitoring that has taken place. The process has at times been a painful one as difficult decisions have had to be made in order to turn the school around. Nevertheless, staff are well motivated, they have high expectations and they are committed to bring further improvement for all children. Increasingly, they are sharing the vision and ambition of senior leaders. Leadership responsibilities have been reviewed and more effectively devolved. The decision, for example, to make the Inclusion Manager non-class based means that she now has sufficient time to carry out her work, and train key workers to support the children in their groups more effectively.

Although many members of the governing body are relatively new to the role, they have high levels of insight. They communicate with leaders, staff, parents and carers, and all stakeholders extremely effectively. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses extremely well and have a tranche of expertise within their numbers to enable them to challenge the school's performance highly effectively. They ensure that children

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are safe and their safeguarding procedures are robust. Care has been taken to make the site more secure and the vetting of all those adults who work with children is thorough.

The school ensures there is no racial harassment of any kind. It promotes equal opportunities well. This is evident in the way in which the school has successfully closed the gap in the progress made by girls and boys and in the progress made by all children, including those with special needs and/or disabilities, and those are at an early stage of speaking English. This, despite the fact that central recording of progress is still at an early stage. Community cohesion is promoted well. The school has a wide range of community links and children have a good understanding of cultural diversity.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

There were 35 responses to the questionnaires. Most parents and carers were positive and exceptionally supportive of the school. The very large majority are happy with experience their child is receiving at The Limes. Positive comments often refer to the dedication of all the staff. 'A great teaching staff who keep me well informed about my child's progress', 'The staff have all been fantastic', are just two of the comments recorded. A few parents and carers expressed concerns over some of the changes that have taken place this year and some felt they had insufficient opportunities to support their children's learning. . The inspection found that change has been necessary in order for improvements to be made to the provision for their children. It has also suggested to the school that parents and carers make a more positive contribution to children's learning diaries through celebrating their achievements at home as well as at school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at The Limes Nursery School 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 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 96 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	77	7	20	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	71	7	20	2	6	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	51	12	34	3	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	54	13	37	1	3	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	19	54	13	37	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	48	14	40	4	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	40	19	54	1	3	1	3
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)	13	37	14	40	5	14	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	48	14	40	3	9	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	43	13	37	2	6	2	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	46	13	37	3	9	2	6
The school is led and managed effectively	13	37	13	37	4	11	2	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	59	9	26	1	3	1	3

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



20 June 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of The Limes Nursery School, Bristol BS5 9AT

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really loved seeing you so happy and enjoying all the things to do and learn. You have a really good Nursery with a pleasant outside area. This letter is to tell you some of the things we found out.

You go to a good Nursery. All the adults give you the help you need to help you learn really well.

You behave well and you play happily with each other. You make yourselves useful and always help to tidy up each day.

You all enjoy all the activities that are provided for you. I loved the castle and enjoyed watching you use the quill pens and sand. I thought your visits to the gym were really exciting. I would have loved to have had a go on the trampoline!

All the adults look after you well and keep you safe.

Your headteacher keeps everything running really well and your governing body is extremely good and members visit you often to see how you are getting on.

We have asked the teachers to help you more with your speaking and listening. We have also asked them to make the notes on your learning show what you need to learn next, and let your parents or carers also write what you learn at home in your learning diaries. Teachers also need to make sure that all the records of your learning are written down in one place.

Thank you again for making my time at The Limes so happy.

Yours sincerely

Christine Huard

Lead Inspector

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