

Thornton Lodge Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107593
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	356190
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Brenda Clarke

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	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Howard Roberts
Headteacher	Ms P Stringer
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2008
School address	128a Yews Hill Road Lockwood, Huddersfield West Yorkshire HD1 3SP
Telephone number	01484 226842
Fax number	01484 226842
Email address	office.thorntonlodge@edukirklees.net

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Nine sessions were observed involving the two teachers, nursery day care manager and all teaching assistants. The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, staff and representatives of the governing body and spoke informally with children, parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of evidence including staff planning, children's records, school assessments and school policies including those concerning the safeguarding of children. The 75 questionnaires returned by parents or carers were analysed. Staff also completed a questionnaire.

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

- The children's attainment on entry and the progress they make in the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning and how well assessment is used to identify children's next steps in learning.
- The quality and scope of the curriculum and how well this is contributing to children's learning.
- How well leaders and managers fulfil their roles to sustain and improve provision.
- The effectiveness of links with parents, carers and the local community and how these contribute to children's learning.

Information about the school

Thornton Lodge provides 130 part-time nursery places in two buildings (Dryclough and Yews Hill) that are one and a half miles apart. The Dryclough site is housed within Sure Start Crosland Moor Children's Centre. At Dryclough the governing body also manages a day-care provision, available on a full- or part-time basis, for eight children who are two to three years old, eight children aged three to four years and 12 places for those children aged under two. This provision was also inspected as part of the inspection.

The nursery school is similar in size to others of its type. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The large majority of children are from the British Asian community. Thirteen other nationalities are also represented. Over 50% of children are learning to speak English as an additional language.

Staff have experienced significant instability concerning the future of the school since the last inspection. Plans to federate Thornton Lodge with another school have been on-going for a considerable period of time. The headteacher has been in an acting capacity for six years and the deputy headteacher for five of these. The acting headteacher has been absent since January 2011. The acting deputy headteacher has taken over the role of acting headteacher at the time of the 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

Thornton Lodge Nursery School is a good school. The vast majority of parents and carers are pleased with provision. It is clear from their many comments that children really enjoy school and are eager to start each session. One parent writes, 'My child hates the weekend because there's no nursery!' During a period of instability the school has successfully maintained the good quality of education and care that children receive. There is a shared vision to ensure that each child is fully included in what is offered and, together with their parents and carers, cared for as an individual. This has enabled the school to provide and manage effectively a well-integrated education for children from birth. Behaviour is good and children grow in confidence and self-esteem. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Attendance is broadly average although affected by a small number of children who do not attend regularly.

Children, including those in the day care provision, are enthusiastic and eager to learn and make good progress in most areas of learning. They achieve well from their generally well-below average starting points. This is because there is good teaching from teachers and early years practitioners, a well-developed curriculum and strong teamwork. Children learn to think in shared and sustained ways through good questioning and a rich programme of stimulating activities. The school has worked hard to develop staff expertise in the use of assessment. This is now used well to evaluate children's interests and plan worthwhile activities that extend children's experiences. Opportunities are sometimes missed to use this information to plan work that closely matches children's different abilities, particularly in early counting and calculating activities and when learning the sounds that letters make.

One of the school's key strengths is the excellent outdoor learning environment. This has been given careful evaluation, planning and investment by the whole school team. As a result, children from the babies upwards, play and investigate in a wide range of exciting places, come rain or shine.

Governors offer invaluable support but since the last inspection they have had to focus on significant issues affecting the future of the school. This has understandably limited opportunities to monitor provision rigorously and hold the school to account.

Nevertheless, the acting headteacher has ensured that the school has moved forward in a time of uncertainty. She gives a strong steer to the school and is well-supported by an enthusiastic and experienced team of practitioners. Perceptive evaluation and well-considered actions have enabled the school to refine provision and to improve since the last inspection. Rigorous tracking of children's progress and tackling areas of significant weakness have brought about good improvement. For example, the impact of the new initiatives 'Every Child a Talker' has resulted in good improvement in children's speaking

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and listening skills enabling them to achieve high levels in this area of learning. For these reasons the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Making further use of assessment information to:
 - – plan more rigorously work that closely meets children's different needs and abilities
 - – ensure that small group activities for nursery children cater more specifically for their stages of learning
 - – ensure that teachers systematically plan for and routinely monitor and evaluate children's progress across all areas of learning.
- Further develop the role of the governing body by ensuring that:
 - – governors continue to work diligently with the local authority to resolve the long-term stability of the school
 - – governors monitor and evaluate provision, and hold the school to account.
- Develop further strategies to improve children's attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

2

Across all settings children demonstrate much enthusiasm and motivation as they learn and practise their skills. The youngest children show high levels of trust in adults; for example, during the inspection they enthusiastically donned outdoor overalls and had fun watering the garden together. Children collaborate well in physical activities and willingly try new ideas such as a parachute hiding game. It is clear that children love coming to school and eagerly greet their friends at the start of each session.

Children make good progress throughout their time in day care and the Nursery. School data shows that most children who enter the Nursery at three years of age demonstrate skills well below those expected for their age, across each area of learning. By the time that children transfer to Reception classes, attainment has risen and is much closer to average. Children make outstanding progress in their social and emotional development and communication skills so that most attain levels expected for their age in these areas. Throughout the settings adults invest quality time in extending children's vocabulary and in encouraging children to explain their thoughts. Bilingual assistants are skilled in engaging those at an early stage of learning to speak English, enabling children to be fully involved in nursery life. These children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because of the rigorous attention to their individual needs and the good quality adult support they receive.

Older children listen attentively, make independent choices and concentrate for good periods of time. This equips them well for their move to a Reception class. Children's achievement in learning the sounds that letters make and in early counting and calculations is satisfactory rather than good. In the Nursery classes there are daily group sessions where these skills are taught but opportunities are missed to place the children in smaller groups to cater for their different abilities and needs more closely.

Children demonstrate a good understanding of healthy eating. They have planted fruits and vegetables outdoors and showed great excitement when the potato crop was

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harvested (and eaten!). Hand-washing routines are well established for all children. Children are encouraged to take risks outdoors, for example when using the rope to climb down the hill, but demonstrate a well-developed understanding of safety. Children make a good contribution to school life. They readily tidy up and say what they would like to learn next. Attendance is average and is affected by a very small minority of children who are frequently absent, and parents and carers taking children on extended holidays abroad to visit families.

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	3
The quality of children's learning and their progress	2
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	2
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
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?

The outstanding interaction between adults and children, combined with the well-thought-out organisation of the accommodation, curriculum and choice of resources ensure that provision is of a good quality. Staff are very good role models for children and through their sensitive handling children behave well and care for each other. The main focus is on promoting learning through first-hand experience. Regular observations by staff inform them about children's particular interests and staff are skilled in planning ways of developing these interests further. A recent development has been that key workers now use their daily assessments to complete children's records and build up a picture of each child's development in different strands of learning. Scrutiny of children's files indicates

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that the assessment of counting and calculation receives less focus than other areas. Some key workers indicate that they feel less confident when teaching early numeracy skills and opportunities are missed to plan work that more closely meets children's different abilities. This contributes to children's slower progress in numeracy.

The curriculum ensures a good mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities, enabling children to follow their interests and extend their learning. The promotion of communication, language and literacy is a strong focus within the school's curriculum. Staff were frequently observed in the inspection talking with and alongside children in engaging ways. For example, one practitioner handling jelly with two-year-olds introduced words such as 'slimy' and 'oozing' to widen the children's vocabulary. As a result, all children are becoming confident communicators. The stunning outdoor provision contributes significantly to provision and ensures that learning is fun and full of surprises. Children have the space to enjoy a full range of challenging tasks throughout the session, including opportunities to climb, crawl, dig, build, talk, read and write.

Good care, guidance and support are paramount to the school's provision. Other professionals are used well to support children with specific needs. Staff have recently trained to use signing when speaking. This greatly increases the scope of communication and understanding for those at an early stage of learning to speak English. The school closely monitors attendance and has robust procedures to remind parents and carers of the importance of regular attendance. As a result, although attendance is broadly average, it is rising.

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?

During a time of significant instability the acting headteacher has galvanised staff, channelling their skills and enthusiasm to develop a highly committed, enthusiastic team. Good monitoring of teaching and learning with a strong emphasis on how all practitioners engage with children has ensured that all adults are firmly focused on supporting children and developing their learning. This is a key reason why children achieve well. The day-care manager has also developed a cohesive team of early years practitioners. They demonstrate skill and dedication in their work with the youngest children. As a result, children thrive. The school has successfully tackled a recommendation made at the last inspection to develop children's thinking through talk and play so that this is now a strength of provision. Rigorous tracking of children's progress by the acting headteacher gives a strong steer to develop planning and has resulted in perceptive new initiatives to

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improve provision further. All staff are fully involved in the assessment process but middle managers have yet to develop their roles to rigorously monitor this provision, evaluate strengths and areas for development and adapt provision in response to this. The governing body is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive of staff in this time of uncertainty and work diligently with members of the local authority to achieve the best possible outcomes for the school's future. Circumstances have limited their role in challenging the school.

The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination well. Improved tracking is closing the gap in progress between different groups of children. There is good promotion of cohesion especially with the community the school serves, shared among the whole team. As a result, the ethnic and cultural diversity of families is celebrated and strongly promoted within the school. The school is extremely welcoming. Excellent displays of photographs and activities are made on the walls with notices translated into community languages to extend parents' and carers' knowledge of provision. Strong links with parents and carers ensure the personal needs of children are met extremely well. Parents and carers also indicate that they value the support they receive in time of need. However, not all parents fulfil their role to ensure regular attendance. Safeguarding procedures are good, policies are comprehensive and procedures ensure children are protected and supported very effectively. The exemplary procedures for fire evacuation at the Dryclough site take into account the complex nature of the building and protect children further.

There are strong links with a wide range of external agencies which contribute to children's good progress and well-being. Resources are deployed well and the nursery provides good value for money.

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	3
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

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Views of parents and carers

More than half of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Almost all expressed their full support for the work of the school. Comments typical of the questionnaires include, 'The Nursery has done a wonderful job with the progress and development of my son' and 'My daughter is very happy here and I have no concerns'. Inspectors endorse these positive opinions and consider they are a reflection of the good partnership the school has with parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thornton Lodge 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 75 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 130 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	72	19	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	63	24	32	2	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	41	55	31	41	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	45	36	48	2	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	36	48	35	47	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	41	37	49	5	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	43	40	53	1	1	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)	33	44	33	44	3	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	44	37	49	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	41	39	52	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	41	35	47	6	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	45	36	48	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	67	21	28	3	4	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



7 July 2011

Dear Children,

Inspection of Thornton Lodge Nursery School, Huddersfield, HD1 3SP

We really enjoyed visiting you all at your nursery school. We enjoyed watching your activities indoors and outside, snack time, group time and lunchtime for those of you in day care. You showed us that Thornton Lodge is a good nursery school.

When you were playing outdoors we were astonished at how much there was for you to do and I will remember the cement I got on my clothes when you were busy building a wall! I was amazed to see the size of the potatoes you had grown and your strength when pulling them out!

You told us that you like your nursery, that you feel safe and that grown ups help you. I watched babies in your school having lots of fun watering the plants and the two-year-olds finding hidden sea creatures in a tray of sparkly jelly. I was very pleased to watch this and I even got glitter on my hands and face.

I have asked the grown ups to do three important things to make your school even better for you.

- Arrange you in smaller groups at group times so that your learning is just at the right level for you.
- Make sure that governors find out more about what you are learning as you play so they can help you to continue to enjoy school.
- Find more ways to encourage all of you to attend school regularly unless you are poorly.

It is really great that you are learning so well. Well done!

Yours sincerely,

Brenda Clarke

Lead Inspector

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