

Wallace Road Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121786
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	380318
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge

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	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terri McInerney
Headteacher	Kim Baxter
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2009
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Age group	3–4
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, one of whom was in school for a half-day. Inspectors carried out seven lesson observations and saw all three teachers teach. Informal discussions were held with parents and carers and with children. Inspectors also met with staff and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work and a 'Stay and Play' activity for local parents and carers who have children under three. Inspectors scrutinised children's records, school policies, assessment information and other documents. Questionnaires from 35 parents and carers were scrutinised as well as seven completed by staff.

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

- Do all groups of children make similar progress across all areas of learning, particularly those for whom English is an additional language, and are standards rising each year?
- How successfully does the school work with parents and carers and outside agencies to support vulnerable children and improve outcomes for them?
- How effectively has the school secured improvements since the last inspection and to what extent has challenge from the governing body contributed to this?

Information about the school

Wallace Road Nursery School is a small school, although pupil numbers have increased since the last inspection. Children join in the term of their third birthday; they can start at the school in any term but the great majority join in September. Most children attend either in the morning or the afternoon, but a small number remain at school all day. The majority of children are of White British heritage. Currently there are 21 children for whom English is an additional language, the largest group being Polish. A very small proportion of children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A high proportion of children have family circumstances likely to make them vulnerable. The school's budget is enhanced by a local children's centre so that a family support worker can be employed to run sessions in the school's family room for local parents and carers with children under three. The school runs an early morning 'breakfast club' and a 'lunch club' for children who attend all day.

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

Wallace Road Nursery School's overall effectiveness is good and it provides good value for money. Its care, guidance and support for children and families are outstanding and result in exceptionally high levels of parental confidence and feelings of safety and security among children. One parent reflecting the views of several others said, 'The staff are exceptional with the care they provide.' Staff work very closely in partnership with parents and carers who feel very well informed and involved in their children's learning. The nursery is bright, colourful and stimulating. High quality, appealing learning resources successfully secure children's interest as soon as they come in and engage them well throughout sessions. Another parental comment described this well, likening the nursery to 'a little piece of childhood heaven'. Children thoroughly enjoy their time here. Through their activities, they contribute in a very wide range of ways to their school, the local and wider communities.

Because the provision is good, all groups of children make good progress. Over the last three years, an increasing proportion of children have achieved above age-related levels of development by the end of the year. In general, their levels of development are similar to those expected and they are well prepared to enter a reception class.

The teaching and assessment are good. Among the many strengths of teaching, the warm quality of relationships that staff have with children and the way that they allow children to take a lead in their learning both stand out. Through thorough assessment, children's needs are accurately identified. Children have a broad range of enjoyable experiences, tailored to meet their particular needs. Planning is thorough and staff plan effectively together so that all know where their efforts need to be targeted. However, this does not always find its way into written plans, so that volunteers or temporary staff can readily see which children need a slightly different approach. Children's progress is carefully tracked each term as staff routinely note what children say, understand and do to demonstrate their achievements. However, there are some gaps in these notes where children have not been observed for a few weeks in a particular area of learning. Adults generally interact well with children to move their learning on, but there are a few occasions when they miss opportunities to deepen knowledge and understanding, particularly for the most-able children.

The school has a good capacity to improve because it is well led and managed. The headteacher provides a good role model to other adults who are supporting learning.

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There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement and good staff morale. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection.

Self-evaluation is accurate. The school carefully monitors the wealth of data it has on how individuals and groups progress. However, its evaluation of progress is not informed by agreement of what constitutes good progress for children in a nursery. As a result, the school is not certain whether the long-term whole-school targets it sets for children's levels of development are challenging or not. The improvement plan reflects high expectations and is firmly focused on raising levels of development but the objectives set are not consistently measurable, which makes it difficult for managers to judge how successful these developments are.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the quality of teaching and assessment by ensuring that:
 - strategies for moving individual children on, discussed in planning meetings, appear in written planning that is accessible to all adults who support learning
 - observations are regularly carried out for each area of learning
 - adults maximise opportunities for learning in all their interactions with children, particularly the most-able.

- Strengthen self-evaluation by:
 - setting a school benchmark for good progress and using this to inform target setting, monitoring and evaluation of the progress made by all groups of children
 - including measurable targets in the school's development plan.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**2**

Children achieve well. Because cohorts are small, children's overall levels of development on entry vary considerably from year-to-year. However, they progress well from their various starting points to reach at least age-related expectations by the end of the year and an increasing proportion reach above average levels of development. Boys and girls make similarly good progress. Children for whom English is an additional language have individual and group sessions and good resources to develop their English language skills. These features support them well so that they make good progress. Similarly, children with special educational needs and/or disabilities have specific targets jointly worked on by staff and parents and carers. They also have individual programmes, devised by professionals and implemented by staff, to support aspects of their development such as speech, language and mobility skills. As a result, they make good progress too. Most children attend well and are developing good habits for school. A few families take long holidays, but staff are good at supporting them when they return.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Encouragement

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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and well-deserved praise make children proud of their achievements, which are celebrated well through photographs, video clips and voice recordings. Children have a good understanding of cultural diversity as provision for this has been improved since the last inspection. Children settle very quickly and clearly feel quite secure at the nursery. They behave well, respecting safety rules such as the one-way system for wheeled toys outdoors. They know that visitors are trusted adults, and if they are unsure why someone different is there they ask one of the staff.

The quality of learning is good for all groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Children’s good behaviour contributes well to this, particularly in adult-led sessions such a story time when they hang on every word and join in with familiar words. Children from different backgrounds get on well together and upsets are rare. Children readily engage in the activities set out for them and often remain focused for a good length of time on one or two activities, rather than flitting about. Most respond quickly to adult guidance, such as taking turns and sharing resources. They persevere to solve problems because adults give them time to try. A strong feature is the way in which children initiate activities by using creatively the resources provided for them, for instance, when water-play and wheeled toys were combined to create a car washing activity. Because resources are accessible, children readily make choices and are independent.

Children’s contributions are excellent. They help to clear away resources, look after African land snails at home during the weekends and holidays, grow fruit and vegetables at school to eat there and at home, and go shopping for supplies for breakfast club. They act as ‘buddies’ for newer children, sometimes learning a few words of a new friend’s language to make them feel at home. They help in activities to raise money for local and national charities and when the headteacher visited The Gambia, children brought in pencils for her to take to a school there.

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	1
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	1

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

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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

How effective is the provision?

Before children start at nursery, staff visit them at home and a comprehensive booklet of information is compiled about each child. As a result, staff know a good deal about them before they arrive. This is supplemented well by an initial assessment of their knowledge, skills and abilities. These first assessments are used effectively to shape the curriculum provision. Where scores are lower than expected, for instance, additional opportunities are provided in that area of learning. For children who are more-able or older, more challenging opportunities are provided to extend their learning, such as sessions teaching letters and sounds or going shopping in the local community for ingredients to cook something that can be shared with others. However, opportunities to extend individual children, while known to permanent staff, are not always written into planning for all adults to see.

The curriculum is enriched well by visits, such as to the theatre, and visitors like the police or a music specialist. Activities are well planned and prepared so children are well supported. For example, to learn about personal hygiene and safety children followed a sequence of photographs showing them how to wash and dry their hands before ‘snack’ sessions. Healthy snacks are provided and talked about so children learn that vegetables are ‘good for you’ and they make increasingly healthy choices. Most bring healthy lunchboxes and all take plenty of physical exercise, climbing, cycling, scooting, balancing and running in the spacious outdoor area. Staff allow children to take measured risks, so they are not over-cautious.

In their interactions with children, adults provide good role models and they use questioning well to establish what children know and understand. However, they occasionally miss opportunities to deepen children’s knowledge and understanding by not listening carefully enough to a child’s response. Staff have high expectations and children rise to these by taking the initiative with resources. Adults successfully intervene to develop this. For example, one child playing a drum started to march around the room so a teacher joined him and this drew in more children who formed a small marching band, all playing different instruments. Staff make useful written observations of children when they are engaged in self-chosen activities, and these are used well to inform the next steps but, occasionally, observations are uneven across the areas of learning.

Excellent communication with parents and carers, using a wide range of methods, lies at the heart of the school’s arrangements for care, guidance and support. Individual case studies testify to the success of the school’s work with families in helping to improve outcomes such as behaviour, safety, well-being and self-esteem.

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Key workers are exceptionally thorough in their efforts, often accessing a range of forms of support for children and families to help with crises or difficulties. The school’s influence extends beyond families who have children on their roll, as their family room is regularly used for sessions where parents can bring their under-threes to stay and play. There are very good arrangements to support the transition of children into reception classes, including additional support for vulnerable children. Children continue to learn in the breakfast and lunch clubs because adults interact well with them and provide good play activities.

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	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets children’s needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and staff work effectively as a team. Morale is good and all are committed to securing the best possible outcomes for all groups of children. The school is inclusive and welcoming to all. Resources reflect the diversity of wider society and the performance of all groups in each area of learning is carefully monitored. Where intervention is needed this is quickly provided. As a result all groups achieve equally well. Parents are recognised as partners in the process of helping children learn and the school provides them with an excellent range of information on how well children are doing. Each child leaves with a ‘profile’ that includes voice recordings, digital photographs and video clips on a CD-ROM.

The governing body has a good range of skills and expertise relevant to a nursery, and parental representation is strong. It is committed, supportive and involved well in checking the work of the school. Its members visit regularly, with a particular focus in mind, reporting back on their findings and making suggestions for improvements. The governing body challenges and makes suggestions as a result of monitoring visits and contributes well to decision making, for instance in the debate about whether to extend the day to out-of-hours provision. The development plan is well informed by the school’s evaluation, although it does not always include measurable targets. Evaluation of children’s progress is accurate but not based firmly on measures, because the staff have not agreed what constitutes good progress.

Arrangements to safeguard children are good. Staff and governors are well trained in aspects such as child protection, safer recruitment, paediatric first aid and hygienic food preparation. Risks are carefully assessed and children have a good range of opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe. Collaborative work with agencies

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is effective in improving this outcome for individuals and families. Welfare requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage are met.

The school has addressed effectively the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. In addition, it has weathered well the changes to the funding arrangements for nursery schools and a consequent reduction in its budget. Although the budget is tight, it is managed well and the school is well-resourced and maintained. It has also strengthened its arrangements to promote community cohesion; its plan has been implemented particularly well through its links with a local children’s centre. Evaluations of joint working show a high level of satisfaction among parents and carers of children under three. All groups of children get on noticeably well together.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
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

In a return only slightly below the average for nursery schools, parents and carers showed clearly their very strong satisfaction with what the school provides. No parent or carer disagreed with any statement on the questionnaire, although a few felt it too early in the year for them to express a view on some statements. The strongest satisfaction was about the extent to which the school keeps children safe. There were no concerns identified by parents or carers, but a number of very positive comments were written on questionnaires. Inspection findings confirm parents and carers’ positive views of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Wallace Road 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 78 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	80	7	20	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	77	8	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	22	63	13	37	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	63	12	34	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	69	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	22	63	12	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	69	11	31	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)	21	60	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	20	57	15	43	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	46	16	46	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	69	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	69	11	31	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	26	74	9	26	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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 October 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Wallace Road Nursery School, Northampton NN2 7EE

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed watching you play and learn.

We came to see how well you are getting on and we found many good things happening. Wallace Road is a good nursery school.

The best things about the nursery are that:

- you feel safe there and your families think you are safe too
- there are many ways that you help in school
- your families are very pleased with the nursery and what it does to help you learn and get ready for reception class
- the staff take very good care of you and also help families.

The people who work in the nursery would like it to get even better so we have asked them to:

- do some things to help you learn faster
- use some better ways of finding out how good the school is.

We hope that you will all keep on enjoying your time at the nursery. We wish you well.

Yours sincerely

Sue Aldridge
Lead inspector

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