

Parklands Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	121788
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	380319
Inspection dates	21–22 May 2012
Lead inspector	Geof Timms

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Barnes-Thomas
Headteacher	Sarah Brooking
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2009
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Age group	3–4
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Introduction

Inspection team

Geof Timms

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Ten teaching sessions, or parts of sessions, were observed, covering all parts of the school and different times of the school day. Meetings were held with staff, parents and a representative of the governing body. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at the tracking of children's progress and curriculum planning documents. Policies and documents relating to safeguarding and records of children's work were scrutinised. The inspector also analysed completed questionnaires from staff and 40 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Parklands Nursery School is smaller than the average nursery. It serves the Parklands ward to the north of Northampton but children also attend from across the town and from local villages. The majority of the school population is White British. There are a small number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds and a few are learning English as an additional language. The nursery offers a 15-hour week as standard. Most children attend part-time but a number attend all day. A small proportion of the children are disabled or have special educational needs. These are mainly speech and language difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders. No children have a statement of special educational needs but four children are on Early Years action plus. A children's centre shares the school site. This is inspected and reported on separately.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. Children are exceptionally well cared for and this helps them make outstanding progress in a safe and happy environment. They develop high levels of independence and rapidly grow into very confident learners. Developing children’s critical thinking is at the very heart of the school’s work.
- Children from all groups achieve exceptionally well from starting points that are often below those expected for their age, and by the time they leave attainment is exceptionally high, especially in their personal, social and emotional development, and their speaking, listening and physical skills.
- Excellent teaching leads to children making outstanding progress in all six areas of learning. Teaching is particularly strong when adult interventions take place during child-initiated learning or in one-to-one situations. The school’s ethos ensures children are able to follow their own interests while still taking part in carefully planned activities. The school provides some opportunities for children to experience a range of new technology, but not enough.
- All staff work hard to give consistent messages to children about how they are expected to behave, and this is a focus for discussions about children’s social and emotional needs. As a result, they behave exceptionally well and develop very mature social skills. Their enjoyment is apparent in their positive attitudes and manner.
- The leadership of teaching and management of performance are outstanding. Leadership is very effectively devolved and distributed among staff, and responsibilities are clear. The outstanding curriculum has a major impact on the children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Information on children’s achievements is not always shared sufficiently well with parents and carers during the year. The governing body is very supportive and holds the leaders to account in all aspects of their work.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for children to explore and use new technology.
- Review the use of and accessibility of available data so that information can be shared more meaningfully with parents and carers.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

In recent years many children have entered the nursery with skills and knowledge that are below those expected for their age in all six areas of learning. The current group entered with higher levels, and a number of the children are very able. The school caters for all abilities extremely effectively, and children make outstanding progress in all of the areas of learning. This is also the view of parents and carers. One wrote, 'My daughter loves every moment at the nursery. She is able to express herself and be independent.'

Disabled children and those with special educational needs make excellent progress because of focused and well-planned one-to-one support, and because of the inclusive way they are supported to join in with all activities. Children who start at the school at a very early stage of learning English are equally well provided for and make outstanding progress. Their needs are very effectively planned for and they are well supported throughout each session. This was observed during the inspection as an adult used book illustrations to very effectively develop a child's vocabulary about the home. Boys and girls make equally outstanding progress because the range of activities and adult interventions support the learning of all groups of children very successfully. Displays of children's work are used well to illustrate learning. For example, photographs of dough-making were annotated with the comments children made during the process, showing how they observed the changes to materials and thus improved their knowledge and understanding of the world.

The school is especially effective at promoting children's personal, social and emotional development. Children settle quickly at the start of the day and immediately find friends and activities to enjoy without direct adult help. The staff interventions are extremely effective in developing children's speaking and listening skills to a high level. Reading and writing opportunities abound and children are happy to settle with an adult to be read to or to talk about a book they have previously read. One boy excitedly shared a book he had brought from home and talked very knowledgeable about the events and even some of the moral implications, such as when one does not tell the truth. All aspects of children's physical development are exceptional by the time they leave the school. They have a great time exploring the resources outdoors. They climb trees with confidence, ride wheeled toys and are physically active throughout the day. Equally positively, they

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develop finer skills through activities such as cutting, drawing, painting and using a hammer and nails on wood. Children are able to use computers, which they do sensibly and with growing skills. However, these opportunities are currently constrained by the limited resources available.

Quality of teaching

All parents and carers are confident that the school teaches their child well. The staff make a very strong, knowledgeable and effective team. This has a clear impact on the excellent relationships between the children and adults, and the effectiveness with which children learn. The teachers and early years practitioners provide an outstanding range of experiences so that children develop their independence as well as learning new skills and knowledge. The tank of tadpoles was a focus of interest during the inspection and many of the children observed them closely and talked about how they change and develop into frogs. When there has been rain children are taken outside to explore the puddles, using whisks and liquid soap. All such activities have a positive impact on children's outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The staff encourage independence by making resources accessible to children so they are able to make decisions about appropriate equipment to use, or what area of the nursery indoors or out they want to experience. Staff work very hard to plan and prepare each session so that all children benefit from excellent learning opportunities. Daily planning sessions ensure that all staff are aware of their roles and their learning focus. In addition, excellent one-to-one or small group sessions support more-able children, disabled children and those with special educational needs, including emotional difficulties. Staff interventions are thoughtful and extremely effective in extending children's learning and thinking skills. For example, in one session an adult's questions helped a child begin to predict and recognise implications from story characters' actions.

In addition to daily planning meetings, key staff meet weekly to discuss individual children's progress, extra support and activities they may benefit from, friendships and other social aspects of their development. These discussions are highly professional, and help ensure a consistency of provision as knowledge of children's learning and developmental needs is shared. Observations and the assessment of children's learning, including those 'wow' moments, help monitor learning in depth and ensure their next steps are well planned.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is outstanding and children make excellent progress in their personal and moral development because of the consistent emphasis on these aspects evident in all activities. Parents and carers say their children feel safe at school. Without removing the excitement of exploring new learning, especially physically, staff are vigilant in observing and tracking children's activities to eliminate unnecessary risks. Children are developing an excellent ability to keep themselves safe in a variety of

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situations.

Children are very happy and relaxed in the nursery. Attendance is above average and parents and carers are clearly aware of the important habit of regular attendance even at this early age. Children quickly adapt to the presence of new adults and very proudly share their work and play. They work exceptionally well together and staff are very knowledgeable about the ebb and flow of children's friendships. Their observations of learning include notes on how well children play together, or work happily alone, or who in a group takes a more dominant role. Children's behaviour contributes well to their learning and there are no incidents or records of any bullying of any type, or unsafe behaviour. Any over-boisterous behaviour is quickly dealt with through very effective interventions by staff.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers have been successful in maintaining and building on the outstanding standards and provision noted at the last inspection. Improvements to the arrangements for the transition to primary school have been very successfully introduced. These now take much more note of the views of children and parents, and include closer liaison with primary school staff. This is very effective in ensuring children are extremely well prepared for moving on. In addition, arrangements for children starting school include parents and carers taking part in a creative activity. They then leave their efforts behind for their child to see on the next day. This is a very popular way of helping children settle quickly. Along with the other outstanding features of the school's work, this shows that continual improvement is part of the school's ethos. All staff regularly take part in training to extend their knowledge and skills. A recent excellent example of this has been the work done to develop children's speaking skills. Links with the children's centre are positive in supporting the families of children in the nursery.

The headteacher and the lead teacher monitor the work of all staff very effectively through regular and detailed observations. These are made by observing staff interventions and also by tracking children to monitor the experiences they have, especially regarding their well-being, independence and learning. This ensures that assessment is clear about children's learning and the progress they make in sessions and not just about the teacher's actions. The governors ensure their training supports their understanding of the work of the school, and they successfully support and challenge its work through regular visits and an effective committee structure. The school's self-evaluation is very accurate and its development planning has an appropriate focus on the important issues for improvement.

The school promotes children's equality of opportunity well. Children from different backgrounds and cultures are extremely well supported and fully included. Efforts by leaders to recognise and use their first languages support this work effectively. Assessment is used very effectively to track individual children's attainment on entry, their regular progress in all areas of learning, and their final attainment when leaving the school. This information is not shared with parents and carers consistently or

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regularly enough, although many informal discussions about progress do take place.

The outstanding curriculum supports the school's ethos of developing children's independence and critical thinking skills. All areas of learning are covered with a rich and wide range of activities and experiences. These include visits out of school, such as a recent train ride that proved very exciting for many and resulted in some excellent creative work and speaking opportunities. Throughout all these activities safety has a high priority, and the school leaders and governing body ensure all safeguarding requirements are met.

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 pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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 pupils. 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

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

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

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

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



23 May 2012

Dear Children

Inspection of Parklands Nursery School, Northampton, NN3 6DW

Thank you for being very kind and friendly to me when I visited your school recently. I especially enjoyed the way you loved showing me what you were learning to do. You go to an outstanding school and that means that you learn a lot and enjoy yourselves.

These are the things I liked most.

- You learn lots of new things and make excellent progress.
- You behave really well and look after each other.
- The teachers plan lots of exciting and fun things for you to do.
- You learn to get on well together, and to talk to and listen to others.
- You are really good at being active, and using tools and equipment of all sorts.
- You are happy in the nursery and are very independent, and this helps you to learn really well.
- Your parents and carers think you are doing very well, and I agree with them.
- The adults plan for all of your needs very well and they understand when you need extra support or an extra challenge.

I have asked the school to do two things to make your learning even better.

- Give you more chances to experiment with a wider range of new technology.
- Think about more ways it can share information about how well you are doing with your parents and carers.

I hope you carry on enjoying your learning and making good progress. Enjoy your time at Parklands and keep working hard and playing as well as you can!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms
Lead inspector

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