

Brunswick Nursery School

Young Street, Cambridge, CB1 2LZ

Inspection dates 19–20 September 2012

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Outstanding | 1 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The school has sustained very successfully all aspects of excellence identified at its last inspection, when it was also judged outstanding.
- High-quality leadership, monitoring, management and governance ensure excellent teamwork and consistent approaches to teaching and care which are practised by all staff. This enhances significantly the children's learning and development.
- Staff ensure that the children's experiences are very well promoted through play and centred wholly on their needs and interests. This very securely underpins the children's learning and development.
- Teaching shows excellence in the ways it enables children to become well socialised, able to develop independence and explore through a rich range of activities entirely appropriate to their age.
- Excellent assessment is focused firmly on day-by-day observations which are the basis of first-class planning
- The school's continuous drive for improvement includes refining its assessment systems to ensure an even closer match with new national approaches, and to increase the involvement of children's families.
- Children's outstanding achievement and rapid progress is secured by the ways staff help them to prepare for their work and play.
- There is a very strong emphasis on children's personal and social development which results in their outstanding behaviour and strong understanding of being safe.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place during the first week in which almost all children started attending the school for the first time. During the previous two weeks the staff had undertaken a series of home visits to get to know the children and their families, and to help them to understand each individual child's needs.
- During the inspection, the key focus was to help the children settle into school. All activities were designed specifically to start the process of assessing and recording individual children's learning and development at the start of the school year.
- The inspector made eight separate observations totalling some four hours. Two joint observations were undertaken with senior leaders.
- All teachers, nursery nurses, key workers and support staff were seen working with the children. Sessions of the breakfast and after school club were also observed. Opportunities were taken throughout the inspection to talk with children and their parents and carers.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of school documents including: development plans; policies; self-evaluation reports; monitoring files; safeguarding and curriculum materials; and information for parents and carers. Governing body documentation was examined, including the headteacher's reports to the governing body and other reviews of school performance.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the senior teacher (who is also the special educational needs coordinator) and other teachers, nursery nurses, key workers, teaching assistants, office staff, representatives of the governing body, a visiting educational psychologist and a representative of the local authority.
- Telephone conversations were held with representatives of the school's education partners, including a representative of Cambridge University's Faculty of Education, and a special educational needs coordinator from the school's partner cluster of nursery schools.
- The inspector took account of the 16 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and spoke individually with many parents and carers during the course of the inspection.

Inspection team

Michael Miller, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average nursery school taking children from all over Cambridge City.
- Almost all children only attend the school for the three terms of the Nursery Year. They attend five sessions per week, either mornings only, afternoons only or half the week full-time. The school has places for 80 children. At the time of the inspection a few who had registered had still to start school but were due to do so later in the week.
- In addition to the 15 free hours, the school offers a limited number of extra chargeable hours, for children on the school roll, through Brunswick Integrated Care (known as BIC). This is managed by the governing body and includes a breakfast and after-school club. During the school day, all BIC activities are integrated fully with children's normal activities and work.
- The large majority of children are of White British heritage; the proportion from other ethnic backgrounds, or who speak English as an additional language, is broadly average.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs, including those supported by early years action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is average. These children's needs include: speech, language and communication difficulties; autistic spectrum disorder; hearing impairment; and physical disability.
- There are currently no children for whom the school receives the pupil premium.
- The school currently holds the Investors in People and Healthy Eating awards.
- The headteacher has been in post for four years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine the school's systems for the assessment of children's progress, and maintain the highest levels of challenge for each individual child, by:
 - extending the use made of the regular observations and recording of each individual child's learning by collating these increasingly closely with the new national statements concerning each child's expected development
 - encouraging more parents and carers to contribute to their children's learning journey 'Year Books' by including personal, family observations and photographs relating to their children's learning and development at home.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **is outstanding**

- There is a plaque in the school's garden which states: 'Recognise all who stand in this place, the opportunity to recapture through your children every childhood pleasure, discovery and joy, for in this place such memories are truly reborn.' This ethos and philosophy helps explain why children achieve so well at the school.
- School data, from accurate and extensive assessments, show that most children enter the school with levels of knowledge and skills which are broadly in line with those expected for their age.
- Most children make significant, rapid and sustained progress to reach levels of development well above those expected for their age by the time they transfer to the Reception classes in other schools. Elements, such as their progress in mark making and the development of a love of books, prepare them exceptionally well for writing and reading work.
- The range of languages spoken by staff aids significantly the ability of children for whom English is an additional language to engage with adults and make excellent progress. Staff show a natural flair for being able to communicate with children and set them at their ease.
- Discussions with staff and the parents of disabled children and those who have special educational needs show they feel supported well. They appreciate the outstanding progress that their children make because of the expert provision and the experience of the staff. Such children are monitored consistently by their teachers and key workers. A visiting educational psychologist praised the school for its commitment to providing the best possible opportunities for children to make sustained progress.
- Staff ensure that fun in learning is a natural, everyday factor in enabling the engagement of children in activities. Even though children were in their first days of starting school, they were making excellent progress in the development of their dispositions and attitudes to learning.
- During the inspection, a full range of 'free-flow' activities was on offer, across both inside and outside environments; this enabled real excitement in learning. All children were enabled to sample experiences covering all aspects of their expected learning and development. This also reflected the school's strong focus on ensuring equality for all.
- Children profit immensely from every opportunity not only to show their individuality but also to take risks in exploration and discovery, whether making a chute from bamboo sections to test scientifically toy racing cars, exploring flora and fauna with magnifying glasses or making friends with the school's rabbit.
- Staff maintain a constant dialogue with the children. This enables the seamless promotion of: children's speaking and listening skills; their personal, social and emotional development; a sense of community and care for others; the use of language for communication and thinking; the application of exploration and investigation skills; children's use of equipment and materials; and the development of their imaginative play.

The quality of teaching **is outstanding**

- As one parent wrote, 'The staff do a fabulous job, and I've learnt a great deal about my child due to their help.' This encapsulates the overwhelming response of parents and carers to the quality of teaching at the school.

- Teaching and assessment are exceptional because staff use their daily observations of the children to build extremely effectively on the children's experiences and contributions.
- An important focus of the school's further development of teaching and activity planning is linked to enhancing the rich opportunities for extending children's learning. The school is aiming to achieve this through fine tuning the ways it assesses children's progress.
- Teachers are currently working on refining the school's assessment systems to take specific account of the new national statements¹ concerning each child's expected development.
- Staff are taking a practical approach to their review of assessment strategies to ensure that they maintain an effective approach to challenging children. They are aware of the importance of meeting accurately the needs of children who may be at the lower, middle or higher ends of the new national bands for assessing children's development in the Early Year Foundation Stage.
- The impact of the tracking and planning for disabled children and those who have special educational needs, or for whom English is an additional language, is excellent. This is not only because such children are enabled to be integrated fully into the school's life and work, but also because of the high quality of their individual education plans.
- Teachers and key workers alike contribute very well to assessments, and information for parents and carers, through the children's Learning Journey 'Year Books'. Discussions with parents and carers show these records are valued highly. The school encourages parents and carers to enrich these 'Year Books' by contributing their own family pages and entries, but relatively few choose to do so in practice.
- Resources are of high quality and used very effectively. The outside area provides a highly stimulating oasis for the children. It is packed full of interest from the covered sandpit through the textured, sensory pathways to the climbing rock and decking space. It is designed for all-year-round use and teaching, even in inclement weather.
- Families are encouraged to become involved actively in their children's learning, not least through activities such as the annual, and much anticipated, 'pyjama party'. In this, whole families, including siblings, explore books together, and parents and carers can explore ways to help their children with general reading and literacy development.
- Children's spiritual and cultural development is fostered very well. This is achieved through artwork, such as the totem pole in the garden representing the wildlife after which each key worker group is named. Children also enjoy the wonder of visiting local building sites, growing produce on the school allotment, and the excitement of visiting a local fire station. Such activities extend very well the children's general experience of the world around them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- There is a consistent and sensitive approach to behaviour management which ensures that staff have the highest expectations of children's behaviour. Children respond quickly to this, right from their first day at school. A compassionate approach by staff helps reinforce children's proper understanding of right and wrong from their very first experiences at the

¹ From September 2012, the prime areas are communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. The specific areas are literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design.

school.

- Children settle quickly into life at school because it works closely with families to manage separation arrangements at the start of sessions. Parents and carers are encouraged to stay and play with their children, but subtly withdraw as their children embrace school life.
- An extensive programme of home visits during the first two weeks of the autumn term not only help staff to get to know the children and their needs but also help families prepare their children well for school. As one girl said to her teacher on her first morning, 'You came to my house!' This enables the children to feel safe and secure right from the start.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding because children develop self-confidence, are enabled to socialise very well, and show consistently high levels of concentration throughout the day. Consequently, some do become tired at times; staff deal with this sensitively and children respond very positively.
- Staff make good use of simple tools, such as sand timers, to ensure that children develop the concept of sharing and taking equal turns during activities. At times, children showed great fascination with the sand timers themselves, captivated by their working. Extended concentration was also seen when children were fishing with magnetised rod and line. This activity was also good for their physical coordination.
- Children's spiritual and social development is particularly strong and promoted well through the consistent encouragement of their curiosity, respect and care for each other. As another parent wrote to the school at the end of the last academic year: 'Thank you for being a second home for my children. They feel loved, happy, confident and safe.'

The leadership and management are outstanding

- All parents and carers responding to the online questionnaire, and those spoken with during the inspection, had no hesitation in recommending the school because of the high quality of its leadership and management. The headteacher sets a very fine example, and is instrumental in facilitating the firm foundations upon which the school continues to build the high-quality teamwork necessary to sustain its outstanding capacity for further improvement.
- Staff receive justified praise for the excellent information provided for families, the value of the home visits, the quality of induction for the children and the high quality of the school's ethos and environment. Families appreciate that such aspects do not happen overnight but are the result of continuous hard work on the part of the staff and governing body.
- Joint observations during the inspection show that the senior leadership team has an excellent understanding and appreciation of the quality of teaching and learning. Discussions with staff show thoroughly professional levels of self-evaluation and self-criticism; this reflects the constructive impact of the school's performance management.
- Professional development is focused pertinently on teaching and learning. Staff are involved in a wide range of courses and training related to the Early Years Foundation Stage, including up to higher degree level.
- There are strong links with Cambridge University, and discussions with a representative of the Faculty of Education show the school is held in very high regard. Staff and children have been the subject of a project relating to the development of creativity in the early years. This has been completed and is about to be disseminated widely by the university,

with the continuing participation of the school and its staff.

- Discussion with another education partner, from the county's cluster of nursery schools, confirmed the school's strong influence in the field of special educational needs. The advice given and professionalism shown by the special educational needs coordinator is much valued.
 - The school's arrangements for safeguarding its children, and the practical rigour of these, were confirmed during the inspection. Discussions and documentation, as well as practical action, risk assessments and day-to-day health and safety monitoring, confirm this.
 - During the past year the local authority has undergone major restructuring regarding its advisory services for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Contact with the school during the past year has been much more limited than in the past. However, the local authority provides satisfactory light touch support for this outstanding school.
- **The governance of the school:**
- contributes significantly to the everyday life and work of the school; monitoring visits are regular and both written and oral reports to staff are seen as part of a valued partnership with the school
 - is well informed and makes excellent use of its members' expertise in support of the school
 - monitors regularly the impact of teachers' performance management targets which are focused on maintaining and developing further the quality of teaching and learning.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 110596 |
| Local authority | Cambridgeshire |
| Inspection number | 401136 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3–4 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 72 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Joye Rosenstiel |
| Headteacher | Amanda Bannister |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 July 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01223 508790 |
| Fax number | 01223 508782 |
| Email address | office@brunswick.cambs.sch.uk |

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