

Pen Green Centre for Children and Their Families

Pen Green Lane, Corby, NN17 1BJ

Inspection dates 27–28 November 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.

- Children achieve exceptionally well because of outstanding teaching.
- Staff are extremely skilled in building on children's own interests and enthusiasms to develop their understanding across all areas of learning.
- Exceptionally good relationships with parents contribute to children's great enjoyment of school, and their rapid progress in learning, independence and self-confidence.
- The space and equipment available to support learning indoors and outside are varied, extensive and of high quality.
- Children's outstanding behaviour, and strong feelings of being safe and secure, rest firmly on the warm, positive relationships they have with the adults, particularly with their own family workers.
- The head of centre, and all staff with leadership responsibilities, support their colleagues extremely well. Staff are given clear feedback on their teaching to help them improve. This is backed up by high-quality training to help them develop their expertise, often in collaboration with the research base at the centre.
- All staff check on children's progress regularly and accurately, and take action to make sure that no-one gets left behind in their learning.
- Strong teamwork, such as the sharing of outstanding practice through video recordings of each other's work, contributes strongly to the consistent high quality of teaching. Plans are in place to extend this work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made two extended visits of about an hour, to observe practice across each of the three main learning areas, as well as a number of shorter visits to observe family-group times. Many of these were joint observations with the head of centre or the deputy head of centre.
- Other visits to the three learning areas were made for specific purposes, for example to observe the learning taking place outdoors or to talk informally to children and to watch and listen to them playing. Inspectors also joined children eating lunch in the dining rooms.
- Inspectors held formal discussions with the head of centre, the deputy head of centre, the coordinator for special educational needs, and with a group of other staff. A number of staff in the school and the children’s centre were spoken to informally. A telephone discussion about the work of the school was held with a representative of the local authority, and a meeting was held with two representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the four replies to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and held a meeting with 14 parents and carers.
- Inspectors examined records of children’s progress and studied the files kept to record and celebrate the achievement of individuals.
- A variety of documentation was analysed, including the centre’s self-evaluation, documentation supporting performance management, a manual for working with parents, and examples of the school’s own monitoring of provision. Documentation supporting the safeguarding of children was checked.

Inspection team

Steven Hill, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Elizabeth Needham

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is large for a nursery school, and has grown since the last inspection. It is part of a children's centre which provides a wide variety of services for young children and families, and an after-school club for pupils up to 11 years of age. The head of the centre is also the headteacher of the school.
- The children's centre also includes a research centre, which provides training, and qualifications up to further-degree level, for early-years practitioners across the country. This inspection was of the school only. The centre as a whole and its varied services are inspected and reported upon separately.
- The school provides places for up to 240 children on a flexible, part-time basis. The majority of children on roll are aged 3 or 4. Recently, the provision of funding for the education of two-year-olds and an expansion of the school's accommodation have enabled a substantial number of younger children to be educated in the school.
- Many of the youngest children are referred to the school from across a wide area of town because they are judged to be likely to benefit from an early start to nursery school.
- All children on roll are taught in one of three parallel nursery learning areas (The Den, the Snug and the Studio), where they are allocated to one of half-a-dozen mixed-age family groups, whose adult leader (either a teacher or a 'family worker') takes responsibility for them.
- Over half the children are White British, with others coming from a variety of other heritages. About a third of pupils speak English as an additional language, with the main home language, apart from English, being Polish.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs is high and increases during the year as assessments are completed. At the end of last year, eight children had statements of special educational needs. Currently, 17 children have special educational needs which are supported at early years action plus, and another six supported at early years action.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on and refine the current good opportunities to share outstanding practice by:
 - making even more use of video recordings to share with everyone the work of staff who are experts in particular areas of teaching
 - giving all individual staff who want to get better at a particular aspect of teaching the chance to watch and learn from a colleague who is particularly good at this.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children begin nursery school with overall skills well below those expected for their ages. By the time they leave, their attainment is in line with expectations, and a good number exceed these. This represents excellent progress during their time in nursery.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make progress that is just as good as that of their classmates. Adults ensure that they are sensitively supported, encouraged to improve and challenged to do their best.
- Children who speak English as an additional language learn English rapidly and make extremely good progress. This is often helped by support in their home language. For example, a group of children animatedly discussed (in Polish) a book about the heart (which was in English) with one of the family workers. This greatly increased their understanding of the body, and built on their emerging great love of books.
- This great fondness for stories and books is consistently developed throughout the day. There is nearly always at least one group of children sharing a book with an adult, discussing the story and developing their reading skills enthusiastically. Children are making an excellent start in learning how letters are used to represent sounds, especially in their own names.
- The understanding of stories is often extended very well as adults join children in acting out events themselves, or using puppets. This was seen when, after reading the story, one of the adults led a group in replaying the story of the *Three Billy Goats Gruff* using models, with children enthusiastically taking parts and discussing what was happening.
- Children make extremely good progress in all areas of learning, both indoors and outdoors. Their physical development, for example, is greatly enhanced by their opportunities in the extensive and varied provision. On the 'beach', an extensive area of sand surrounded by a boardwalk, some children enjoyed digging in the sand or played with driftwood, whilst others played an energetic and lively game of 'What's the Time, Mr Wolf' with enormous enthusiasm.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Adults in the school are very well qualified and have an excellent understanding of how young children learn, and how to promote this. Some are exceptionally expert in particular aspects of provision and act as effective role models of good practice to colleagues.
- All members of staff show high levels of expertise in observing children's play and judging just how and when to intervene to extend learning. They often join in play, helping to maintain children's enthusiasm and showing them how to do things.
- Adults build extremely well on children's own interests when they intervene in their play. They talk to them and ask questions to increase children's understanding and extend their vocabulary. They encourage them to think more carefully about things, always matching this to each child's level of understanding and personal development.
- The staff provide a wide variety of exciting, practically based activities that greatly enthuse children and develop a love of learning. Adults make excellent use of their careful observations of individual children's progress and interests to prepare activities that they know will excite

them and extend their learning.

- The adults' lively enthusiasm for activities, their consistent encouragement for children's efforts and their praise for success lead to great enjoyment and high levels of concentration from children.
- Excellent use is made of the outside areas, whatever the weather. Adults made a virtue of the wet, muddy condition of the track for wheeled vehicles by encouraging the group playing on trikes to set up a 'car wash' and decide prices. Children enthusiastically washed the wheels of the trikes, and thoughtfully discussed with an adult the difficulties of keeping their vehicles clean.
- The outstandingly positive relationships that the adults quickly establish with all children mean that even the youngest feel safe and happy in school, and make great strides in their personal development.
- Adults consistently and successfully encourage children to be independent and make their own decisions about learning. They gently but firmly establish clear routines and guidelines for behaviour. The children follow these extremely well because they like and trust the adults and are keen to please them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour is excellent. Children have very positive relationships with each other and with staff, and follow well-established routines that ensure they are safe. Even the youngest children are clearly extremely happy and relaxed in school.
- Children's enthusiasm for learning shines through in their obvious enjoyment of the huge variety of activities indoors and out, and their animated explanations of what they are doing.
- Children are very independent. For example, one girl decided to go to an adjoining room for a plastic teapot she needed for her play. She explained this confidently, and then insisted that an inspector accompany her to see just what she wanted to do with it.
- Another group of children, who had been acting out a story, decided that they wanted to dance instead. They built their own 'stage' from large blocks, and enlisted the help of one of the adults to clear a space and provide pom-poms and streamers for them, before launching enthusiastically into their dance, joined by others who were swept up in the excitement.
- Children are rapidly gaining an excellent understanding for their age of taking turns, sharing materials and equipment, and playing happily together. This ensures that the school is a calm, cheerful and harmonious place where boys and girls from different backgrounds get on very well together.
- A well-established programme supports children's understanding of how to behave, how to avoid bullying, and how to 'be strong' and make good choices.
- The school gives parents very effective advice and information about children's behaviour, the school's approach, and the reasons for this. Children who initially struggle to behave well improve greatly in their happiness, self-confidence and conduct during their time in the nursery. Parents report that these improvements continue at home.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Excellent leadership has maintained outstanding achievement and learning, despite the school expanding in size and age-range. Rigorous monitoring of the progress of children ensures that all do extremely well and have equal opportunities to succeed socially and academically.
- Senior leaders have high expectations of all staff and keep a careful eye on everyone's practice, taking action to ensure outstanding elements are shared and built upon, and giving colleagues clear feedback on how they can move good practice to be outstanding. This leads to consistently high-quality teaching and learning.
- Performance management is rigorous for teachers and family workers. Targets are set related to each adult's personal performance, management responsibilities and overall school priorities. These are based upon the monitoring of individuals' work and of their own self-analysis of needs.
- Extensive provision for training, to help individuals meet their targets, is in place. A significant number of staff have obtained degrees in early-years education through the on-site research centre, and many others are currently undertaking extensive programmes of study that link back directly to their practice and support developments in school.
- Some outstanding work has been done in sharing the expertise of individual members of staff by videoing practice, and sharing and discussing results with all colleagues. Plans are in place to continue and extend this practice. However, most staff have had relatively few planned opportunities to watch colleagues 'live' or to work alongside them to enhance their own skills.
- Excellent links with parents ensure that they are fully involved in their children's education and they have extremely positive views about this. The partnership between the school and parents supports children's happiness, achievement and behaviour. The close integration of the work of the school with that of the children's centre greatly enhances the support given to children and families.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements, and the school liaises carefully with the rest of the children's centre to ensure that systems are properly integrated to ensure the wellbeing of all.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a very secure understanding of the provision in the school and of how well children are doing. They consistently question the school, so their understanding is continually updated. They work effectively with staff and have been closely involved, for example, in overseeing the setting up of the third learning space and in ensuring the successful introduction of two-year-olds into the school. They have a clear understanding of the budget, and are monitoring carefully likely changes to funding, to ensure that the high quality of provision continues. They are fully involved in monitoring performance management, ensuring that only staff whose appraisal is positive move up the pay scales. Governors have access to a good level of training to help them fulfil their role successfully. This includes safeguarding training, where there is a good level of expertise among members.

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

Unique reference number	131232
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	402454

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Scott
Headteacher	Heather Donoyou
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2009
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