

Ronald Tree Nursery School and Children's Centre

Laburnum Crescent, Kettering, NN16 9PH

Inspection dates 10–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children make very strong relationships with their keyworkers and so feel very safe and confident to learn.
- They learn to play together very well indeed because of the exciting things they have to do indoors and outdoors and the careful ways in which such activities are structured to encourage shared play and learning.
- Teaching is good. Staff are particularly skilled at knowing just when to intervene to help children to extend their thinking and their language, when children are choosing their own activities.
- The new leadership team have introduced good ways of checking on children's progress. These ensure that if anyone's progress in an area of learning is slowing then they are quickly supported to achieve more.
- Leaders and managers and the governors check carefully on the quality of teaching and how this is improving and hold staff responsible for the learning and development of children in their care.
- Disabled children, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make at least good progress and sometimes better because the support available is very well matched to their needs.
- Parents say their children love coming to the Nursery and praise the progress their children make. They are confident in the ways the children are prepared for their next school. The school is held in high regard by the local community and receiving schools.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough of the teaching is outstanding because sometimes the planning does not make what children will learn to do clear and staff do not make sure that everyone is paying attention in group lessons.
- Although progress in literacy is good, it is stronger in early writing than reading, because staff miss opportunities to extend children's reading skills including their phonics skills in the group lessons.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a wide range of activities in the Nursery including learning activities children chose for themselves in the outdoor and indoor learning areas, group activities led by the teacher and early years practitioners and the beginning and end-of-day learning activities. Almost all of these were joint observed with the headteacher.
- The inspector held discussions with members of staff and the governing body and a representative of the local authority. A telephone discussion was had with the headteacher of a receiving school.
- A range of documentation was examined, including governing body minutes, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, the school's policies and practices relating to safeguarding and the promotion of good behaviour, records kept about children's learning and development and teacher's planning
- The inspector took account of 15 questionnaires from staff. Although there were insufficient parental responses to the on-line survey (Parent View) the inspector had discussions with several parents and carers as they arrived to drop off or collect their children and also took account of written testimonies from them.

Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This average-sized Nursery school admits children just after their third birthday. Children can attend for 15 hours per week, either for a morning or afternoon session. Almost half of the children attend for three five-hour sessions. Other children have an extended time at the Nursery either from breakfast time or until later in the day, because their parents pay for such extended provision.
- The Nursery is housed in the same building as the Children's Centre. Evaluating the Children's Centre and the extended provision was not part of this inspection. The Nursery and the Children's Centre have a single headteacher and governing body, although they are otherwise staffed separately.
- Most children are White British, although there are small but increasing proportions of children from a wide range of other backgrounds, including a very few with English as an additional language.
- At the time of this inspection there were a very small number of children identified as being at Early Years action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of children identified as being at Early Years action is in-line with that expected. The main areas of need are speech and language difficulties, developmental delays or autism.
- There have been considerable changes in the leadership team and in the governing body since the previous inspection. A new headteacher and nursery teacher have been in place since September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching particularly in group lessons by making sure staff:
 - follow the school's behaviour policy and expect all children to listen and attend throughout
 - plan in more detail what children will learn during each session and share this with children so that the focus of the learning is always clear.
- Improve the learning and development of children in reading so that even more achieve or exceed expectations by making sure no opportunities are lost both in assigned lessons and in other activities for children to practise and extend their phonic and other early reading skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Nursery with wide-ranging skills but generally these are lower than those of their age in all areas of learning. High percentages of children are achieving below and some well below the levels of others of their age. By the time they leave their skills are broadly in line with those expected or only a little behind, because of the good progress they have made from their starting points.
- Children achieve particularly well in communication and language because staff are skilled in extending their language and their understanding and in enabling them to express their ideas. Children for whom English is an additional language make rapid progress in their speaking and listening because staff sensitively encourage them to try out their English and build their confidence very well.
- The school has had a focus on promoting children's physical skills this year because progress had been slower in these, particularly in fine motor skills such as holding and manipulating tools and pencils and in coordinating their movements. Children have made very strong progress in these areas because all staff have been well trained to develop and extend these skills.
- Children's personal and social development, their knowledge of the world, curiosity, creativity and independence is very well supported through the range of activities provided. For example, the excellent learning observed in the 'builder's yard' was very well supported by staff as children worked out what they might need to do to build their wall, shared their ideas and allocated roles. Excellent use of vocabulary by the adults meant that children themselves were using the appropriate words for tools as well as pondering as to whether the wall was strong enough and what they could do to strengthen it.
- Children use information and communication technology with confidence and most watch carefully and join in well when their teachers use it in lessons. They watch and listen carefully when the teacher uses tablet technology to help them to think about what they might do today and this helps them to plan ahead in their choices.
- Children are well prepared for their Reception year, particularly in the ways they are interested and curious about the world and in their interest in numbers and writing. They readily count forwards and backwards in singing rhymes and games such as hopscotch, some counting easily to 10 and beyond.
- They 'write' confidently using clipboards and most make a good attempt at writing their names. They love stories; enjoying acting them out and make the connections between letters and sounds in their phonics work. However progress in this area would be stronger if they had more planned opportunities to practise these.
- Children who are disabled or who have special educational needs make at least good progress because of the individual support they receive and the careful ways in which staff identify next steps with families and systematically work towards them.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because almost all staff understand so well the needs of children of nursery age and what will best help them to learn.

- Staff know extremely well the children they act as keyworkers for. They observe and record their progress very carefully. The school then analyses this at least termly. This means if children fall behind this is quickly identified and extra support provided. Children's progress is well recorded in 'Learning Journals' which illustrate well their strengths. Excellent reports are provided for parents and carers and future schools that draw a very good picture of each child's strengths and needs.
- Children's skills in early literacy and mathematics are generally well supported through games, planned activities and individual support. This means they make good and sometimes better progress in writing. However progress in reading is more variable, because teachers do not always take up opportunities to develop these skills and phonic skills are not always well taught.
- Well-targeted training and performance management have meant that staff skills in key areas are further developed and have a clear impact on children's progress. For example, children's physical development is now accelerating. Further training in developing reading skills and particularly phonic skills is planned for the near future to strengthen teaching here.
- All staff plan regularly together and plan activities that will build on and excite children's interests and will extend learning well. However the written plans are brief and mean sometimes the purpose of the activity and the learning it is meant to promote are unclear and occasionally in lessons staff do not focus sufficiently on this.
- Staff provide children with many opportunities to extend their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They encourage them to celebrate with each other different traditions or each child's achievements. Quieter times and areas, story work and visitors further promote these and children's understanding of diversity well.
- Families are involved very well in their children's learning. They can borrow books and a range of courses run in conjunction with the Children's Centre help parents to understand their children's development and support it. Parents value these opportunities hugely and are 'thrilled' with the progress their children make and how well they are cared for.
- Most staff are skilled at managing children's behaviour and exciting their interest and engagement in lessons. However sometimes in the group lessons individual children do not listen and neither the group leader nor other staff re-engage these children quickly enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Children behave well. They quickly settle into the Nursery and develop strong trusting relationships with staff. This means they feel very safe and approach their learning confidently and with enthusiasm.
- A particular strength is the way in which children learn to play together and engage in shared tasks. Younger children learn quickly to share favourite resources, whether bricks or a favourite toy. They wait their turn patiently at the climbing activities. Sometimes, however, in group lessons a few children do not join in or listen well even when their teachers try to coax them to. This is why behaviour is good rather than outstanding.
- Children move around the different activities with good attention to safety, for example carrying things very carefully and responding immediately when their teachers warn them of a hazard.

- Children are developing good manners and respect for each other and adults, saying thank you when being helped and asking if the inspector could 'please read them a story'. Others hold open a door for younger children to walk through or offer a toy to an upset child.
- Staff are ever vigilant regarding children's safety and all the required procedures and checks are in place. Parents are very positive about the ways in which their children are cared for and kept safe. However not all send their children to school regularly so they do not always benefit from the Nursery's good provision as much as they could.
- There are clear procedures and policies in place for preventing bullying and promoting good behaviour. Children say that 'everyone is nice here' and 'I like everybody because they are all lovely'. Personal development and independence are promoted very well through the school's curriculum and this helps children to increasingly take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour. Discrimination is not tolerated.

The leadership and management are good

- The new leadership team has a very clear vision and has worked hard to see that teaching continues to be at least good throughout all the recent changes. They have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement well and have already identified the next steps that will help the school improve further. For example they have identified reading as the next area for development and training and that the development plan needs more detail.
- New procedures for the management of all staff's performance have been carefully linked to training and to children's learning and development and have already led to improvements in progress, for example in children's physical development.
- Regular checking on children's progress in all areas of learning is being used well to check on individual children's learning and on areas in which the school needs to do more. This ensures that equality of opportunity is in place and that all groups achieve equally well.
- Plans for teaching topics and for the activities that will be provided each day take children's interests and needs into account very well, although these are not always followed through into every lesson effectively.
- The school works extremely well with parents, carers, local schools and the community to ensure that children's progress is systematically supported and they move smoothly into their various reception classes.
- Children with disabilities and those with special educational needs make good or better progress because the school works with other agencies and the children's centre extremely well to ensure they have the support they need.
- The local authority has provided effective support and training, for example for governors and the leadership to help the school deal effectively with change and move forward.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a good understanding of the Nursery's work and what it now needs to do to improve. Governors have been strengthened recently by new governors and training and bring a good range of skills to the school. They ask searching questions as to how well the school is doing, visiting regularly to check on how the agreed priorities are being implemented and making a difference.

- Governors know their responsibilities well and are ever vigilant as to the safety and well-being of children, making sure that all safeguarding and welfare requirements are met. They understand how staff are held to account and how this relates to children's progress and salaries. They check rigorously on the school's finances and that these are managed prudently and that funding such as the school's deprivation funding is used to best effect.

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.
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School details

Unique reference number	121782
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	402050

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	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Lipscomb
Headteacher	Karen Sharman
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2010
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