

Gloucester Nursery School and Children's Centre

Camborne Close, Delapre, Northampton, NN4 8PH

Inspection dates 28–29 November 2013

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 achievement of all children is outstanding. Whatever their starting points, each child receives the appropriate care and support they need to make excellent progress in all areas of learning.
- Children have strong relationships with the adults in the nursery and, as a result, they develop confidence in themselves and feel very safe.
- Highly experienced staff use their exemplary expertise to plan exciting activities that build on the children's interests and enthusiasm. This helps all children, whatever their background, ability or home language, to make outstanding progress.
- Children's independence is encouraged at all times and they are able to look after themselves and make decisions about what activities to take part in and whether to learn outside or indoors. Further opportunities are being developed to help children plan the next steps in their learning more consistently.
- Assessments are regular and there is a clear overview of the progress of all children and of individuals.
- Children love coming to the nursery and their behaviour is exemplary. They work and play together extremely well and become engrossed in their learning.
- There are excellent additional opportunities provided for children to develop their social skills in the breakfast, lunch-time and tea clubs.
- Staff and members of the governing body value the opportunities to improve their knowledge and understanding so they can improve the quality of provision.
- As a result of outstanding leadership and management, the school has successfully maintained the high levels of achievement and high quality of provision found at the previous inspection.
- Leaders, managers and governors work extremely successfully to make sure that children make as much progress as possible.
- Partnerships with parents are a particular strength of the school. In addition, the school is very well regarded in its local community and has a reputation for excellence within the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed children learning in a wide range of activities, including those they had chosen for themselves, others led by adults, including small group work. Nine learning sessions were observed; several of these jointly with the headteacher. The inspector spoke with children about their learning and also looked at lunch-time arrangements.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at progress and attainment data, the school's development plan, curriculum plans, documentation from the governing body, notes on the checks made on the quality of teaching, arrangements for safeguarding and the promotion of attendance, as well as some of the children's profile books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of staff with specific responsibilities and representatives of the governing body. The inspector spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 22 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and the results of the school's consultation with parents. The inspector spoke to a number of parents who stayed to see their children settle into the nursery, as well as holding a meeting with a group of parents and carers who contributed their views.
- Questionnaires completed by 10 members of the school staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The nursery is of average size and provides part-time places for children in morning and afternoon sessions.
- Most children stay at the nursery for a year, starting when they are just three years of age, and leave at the age of four. A small number of children stay for more than a year.
- Most children join the school in the autumn term. Most children either attend either in the morning or the afternoon and a small number of children access sessions on a flexible basis. Children have the opportunity to join in with the optional breakfast, lunch or tea clubs.
- The large majority of children are of White British heritage, with a minority of children from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. A very small number of children speak English as an additional language. This varies from year to year.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs who are supported through Early Years Action is in line with that found in most schools. The proportion supported at Early Years Action Plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below that found in schools nationally.
- The school shares the site with a children's centre which is managed by the headteacher and governing body. The children's centre provides a wide range of services. These services are subject to a separate inspection.
- Five new members of staff joined the school in September this year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop children's ability to evaluate their own learning and plan what to do next, by ensuring all adults make best possible use of the answers and discussions that arise from questions adults ask children about the activities they choose.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- From their varied starting points, children of all abilities and backgrounds make rapid progress. By the time they move to Reception classes in a range of neighbouring primary schools, children have acquired the skills expected for their age, and a good proportion have learned a great deal more. The most-able children have already begun to read, write simple words, count in sequence and carry out simple calculations.
- Leaders carefully analyse the progress of each group of children in the school, but the focus is on the individual child. More-able children are identified so that they can be challenged to acquire higher-level skills and understanding. Additional information and guidance to support and encourage families to supplement work at home is a key part of the provision and children often take helpful sheets home for families to work together and make things.
- Staff constantly refer to the sounds letters make and children are encouraged to develop their reading and writing skills through mark-making using paint, chalk, pencils, and felt pens. Almost all recognise their name. Many write their name using the initial letter and some make a very good attempt at writing it all. Good opportunities for children to engage in role play and to share stories help their understanding that text has meaning.
- Staff make the most of every opportunity to develop children's mathematical skills. Computer programs and construction activities also contribute significantly to this area of learning. Children have many opportunities to count, and recognise numbers and shapes, as well as learning the language of measure.
- Children are challenged to develop their physical and creative skills. They become skilled at climbing and building using large apparatus. They are confident riding their bicycles, and opportunities to explore different materials and mix paints add much to children's skills in expressive arts and design. They cut and fix in a variety of ways using scissors, tape, sticky plastics and glue.
- Children are encouraged to use their imagination to create pictures, tell their own stories using different resources and investigate sounds. When making musical instruments, the children were encouraged to explore whether the sound was loud or soft. In addition, their mathematical development was enhanced by investigating whether the larger containers made louder sounds than the smaller ones.
- Children make outstanding progress in the development of their personal, social and emotional skills and they develop considerable confidence and independence. They make choices of where to play and learn, and move easily between the different rooms and outside. They play together happily as they share and take turns, serve themselves their mid-morning snack and tidy up the activities before they go home. Some staff encourage children to think about what they want to do, whether inside or outside, and they are beginning to help children reflect on the activity they have done and how they would like to develop this further.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language have additional support, which ensures that they make similar progress to other children. There is no discrimination of any kind because all children have excellent opportunities to succeed. The strong partnership with the adjoining children's centre ensures continuity of care and provision for such children.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- School leaders continue to place a strong emphasis on teaching and learning and are not complacent about the importance of this aspect of their work. They have extremely high expectations of the quality of interactions and teaching of staff at all levels. This is one of the main reasons why the exceptionally high quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection.
- Staff are highly skilled and experienced in working with children of this age. They respond sensitively to children's ideas and interests and consider appropriate resources, how to extend activities to provide additional challenge and new activities to develop children's interests. This has a strong impact on children's personal, social and emotional development, and their readiness for learning.
- All staff successfully encourage children to be independent and quickly develop high levels of confidence as their communication skills improve. Adults actively play alongside groups of children to model activities, engage children and move their learning forward extremely well.
- Both indoors and outdoors, children make rapid progress in their learning and show high levels of concentration and perseverance. This was seen as they shone torches on different surfaces, played 'hide and seek', looked for hidden objects, built complicated structures from wooden bricks or spread jam and butter on their toast for their mid-morning snack.
- Assessment is thorough and notes are constantly taken and used in children's profile books to chart their progress. All information is fed back to determine where more support is needed or to increase challenge, and this is why all children progress so well.
- Parents greatly appreciate the profile books because they can share with their child the progress they make. They also find the home-school books to be a good link, especially for those children who find learning difficult. They say these help them know what their child has been learning.
- Families appreciate that they are active partners in their children's education. During the inspection, 'Tasty Thursday' took place where parents come in to school to cook alongside their children. Much enjoyment and high quality learning took place as they discussed the ingredients together and whether there was enough biscuit dough to make a large cookie person or a small one and how many raisins were needed to decorate the face and body.
- Relationships between staff and children are excellent. There is a consistent approach in the ways in which staff help children to learn and to manage their behaviour. The nursery has a warm, calm and caring atmosphere where children often become engrossed in the activities provided for them. There are, therefore, high levels of respect for the school within its local community.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children have exceptional attitudes to learning showing high levels of persistence and concentration on activities throughout the sessions they attend. They obviously love their time in the nursery and attend regularly.
- Children are encouraged to be independent. This is demonstrated well through their readiness to be involved in caring for their learning environment. For example, during the inspection children swiftly tidied up the resources as well as sweeping up and wiping paint from the tables. Pictures

of where resources go are carefully studied by the children to make sure things go back in the correct spot.

- Parents are unanimous that their children are safe and happy at school. There is no evidence of any bullying and children are taught to care for and to look after one another and to resolve conflicts amicably. Children know how to take turns and are confident to ask one another or an adult for help. This helps to make the school very safe and welcoming.
- Children look out for each other and work together very well. This was seen when those using building blocks to construct a 'lighthouse' found it was accidentally knocked down. They showed very productive cooperation as they explained the structure was 'very wobbly' and then proceeded to start again.
- Simple rules of hygiene are introduced as children are encouraged to use the toilet and to wash their hands independently afterwards and before helping themselves to snacks. Breakfast, mid-morning snack time and the lunchtime clubs are high-quality social occasions where children sit together at the table, usually with an adult.
- Safe risk-taking means that children learn to judge what is safe for them in their work and play, whether on the climbing equipment or using the wheeled toys. Children use various tools, including scissors, to cut different materials, and hammers and drills when working at the woodwork bench.
- A well-established programme of home visits, before children start at the school, not only helps staff to get to know the children and their needs, but also helps families to prepare their children well for school. Through home visits and the regular cooking together sessions the nursery runs, these strong links with families mean that children develop very trusting relationships with staff. The close links with the children's centre mean the school can also offer services to families which ensure children who are vulnerable are cared for extremely well.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher gives very strong leadership with a clear vision of continuous improvement that is shared by all staff. Outstanding leadership and management at all levels, including governance, have ensured that the school has sustained children's high levels of achievement and personal development over many years.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is consistent. School records, and the joint lesson observations with the headteacher, show she has an excellent understanding and appreciation of the quality of teaching and learning. Assessment information is shared, enabling all staff to have a good understanding of how individual children are progressing and where additional support or challenge is needed.
- The school reviews all aspects of its work thoroughly and acts quickly to address any gaps so that no-one becomes complacent and the drive to sustain the school's effectiveness is not slowed. Regular monitoring of teaching and safeguarding ensures that children are safe and have the best access to learning. Outcomes of monitoring are fed back to staff and this, together with wider discussions about performance, identifies appropriate professional development linked to the needs of individuals and the school. Salary progression is clearly linked to the performance of staff.
- The exciting range of well-planned activities builds up children's understanding of the world they

live in. These are supplemented by well-chosen local visits and visitors to the school. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well promoted. Together, staff work to make sure all children have equal opportunities and there is no discrimination.

- Parents are seen as having a crucial part in their children's learning and the school makes every effort to share their expectations for each child and to help parents to contribute to learning. The school works with a wide range of external agencies to support those children and their families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Discussions with parents and carers show that the way staff look after their children is seen as strength of the school.
- The local authority has supported the school very well at a 'light touch' level. The authority makes good use of the expertise of the headteacher and her staff to demonstrate best practice for other early years providers.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is strong. Governors use their expertise in education, welfare and business to benefit the children. They are well informed about the progress children make and of how well prepared they are to move on to the Reception classes in local schools. Since the previous inspection, they have worked hard to develop their own skills and now have an excellent understanding of the strengths of the school and what it needs to do to improve further. Governors make regular visits to ensure that best practice is sustained. They ensure that financial resources are efficiently managed and know how this impacts on children's achievement. Governors see that targets to improve the performance of staff are reviewed carefully and that teachers' pay is linked to how well children are doing. Safeguarding practices are thorough, well documented, well monitored and more than meet statutory requirements.

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	121785
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	429656

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	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia Brown
Headteacher	Julia Mann
Date of previous school inspection	28 March 2011
Telephone number	01604 762251
Fax number	N/A
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