

Countesthorpe Nursery School

The Drive, Countesthorpe, Leicester, LE8 5PB

Inspection dates

30–31 January 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children are well prepared for the next stage of their education because of the good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching they receive.
- All children achieve the expected levels of development by the time they leave the nursery, and some exceed them.
- Children's behaviour is exemplary; they love coming to school as they thoroughly enjoy a wide range of exciting, well-planned activities.
- Parents and carers are extremely positive about the good quality education provided in a safe and secure environment, and the effective partnerships developed between themselves and the school.
- The headteacher leads a strong staff team, all of whom have a very good understanding of how to help children learn effectively.
- Each child's progress is now recorded carefully, and the resulting information is used well to plan their next steps in learning.
- Since the last inspection the governing body, working effectively with the school staff, has taken effective action to tackle the recommendations for improvement.
- Leaders' continual drive to improve standards of teaching and learning is making a significant contribution to children's achievements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching to help children make outstanding progress in all areas of learning.
- Leaders do not analyse the information they collect on children's achievement sharply enough to be sure that different groups are making equally rapid progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven sessions during the inspection, including one seen jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector held discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the headteacher, the lead teacher, and other members of staff.
- A telephone conversation took place with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 21 returns to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's parental satisfaction survey and the staff questionnaire, and spoke with eight parents.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including data on children's current and previous progress, the school development plan, performance management documentation, and records relating to children's behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Geoffrey Dorrity, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average nursery school
- Children attend from the term following their third birthday. All children attend every day during term time on a part-time basis, in the mornings or afternoons.
- The overwhelming majority of children are from White British heritage. None speaks English as an additional language.
- A higher proportion of children than usual would be eligible for free school meals if they attended school on a full-time basis.
- The majority of children transfer to two local primary schools.
- There have been several changes in leadership since the previous inspection. The Chair of the Governing Body and the headteacher are new. The current headteacher was the acting headteacher at the time of the last inspection.
- The headteacher is an affiliate of the local teaching school alliance and offers support to other schools in the local and wider area.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all groups of children make outstanding progress by thoroughly checking their achievements and carefully adjusting learning tasks to move them on quickly.
- Make more teaching outstanding by enabling staff to learn from observing outstanding teaching in this and other partner schools.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join the nursery with skills and knowledge generally in line with what is typical for their age. All children make good progress in their learning. Every child achieves the expected levels and some exceed these by the time they transfer to primary school. This is an improving picture over the past three years, with a target set for at least a quarter of children to be exceeding expectations by the end of the current year.
- Children make good progress in developing their skills in reading and writing because teachers provide excellent opportunities for them to start writing. Small groups of children work with teachers to learn individual letters and sounds. This learning is then effectively reinforced through role-play. For example, when playing in an imaginary boat to cross a river, children wrote messages in bottles. When they read their work to staff every opportunity is taken to focus on the teaching of letters and the sounds they make.
- Staff put a strong focus on the promotion of mathematical skills. Children learn to count in practical activities such as jumping from island to island whilst counting up to 20. Racing and deciding what position they have finished in helps them learn about the order of numbers. When playing in the sand, they are challenged effectively to develop their understanding of measures by making the buckets weigh the same, or when making dragons, deciding on the comparative length of the dragon's tail.
- All children make good progress in physical development and well-being because the nursery provides many opportunities for them to play outside on the large equipment. Children understand the impact that physical activity has on them, describing how they make an 'h' sound when they are breathless.
- Children behave extremely well. They are learning to rely much less on adults, both in directing their own learning through play, and also in their ability to dress themselves to go outside to play. They concentrate for long periods of time on chosen activities, listen carefully and respond really well to adult directions. They sit quietly, concentrating when being read a story. They know that they need to put on coats, gloves and hats to stay warm in cold weather. They show they are aware of each other's needs by helping each other get ready or making room for each other in the boat.
- All parents strongly agreed that their children made good progress in the time they spent in the nursery.
- Some children join the nursery with little experience of playing and learning with other children, often those who would be eligible for free school meals if they attended full time. These children make good progress and achieve what is expected for their age before they move to primary school, but they do not progress rapidly enough catch up fully with their classmates.

The quality of teaching

is good

- All teaching is at least good and some is outstanding. School leaders regularly check its ongoing effectiveness and, through rigorous observation and guidance, raise staff expectations even higher.
- A key strength is the way staff regularly share information about children's progress and interests

so that planning for learning is firmly based on activities that will engage the children. Careful observations of learning and checks on progress clearly identify what children need to learn next. This close attention to children's needs and motivating them is what drives the good progress they make.

- Records of progress are used effectively to identify how well individuals are doing. However, the information is not yet being analysed sharply enough to check how different groups are progressing and so identify the most important priorities for fine-tuning teaching to ensure that all children make equally rapid progress.
- Staff fully understand that children need to lead their learning for themselves. They are skilled at knowing when to offer help and become involved, or to intervene to develop thinking, and when to step back and allow children to discover things for themselves. For example, the member of staff working with a group pretending to row a boat waited while the children attempted to move the boat, then asked them why it would not move.
- There is a stimulating learning environment indoors and out. All resources are stored in easily accessible containers, with clear labels of the contents, so children can get equipment out and put it away for themselves. Children are successfully encouraged to make decisions about what they want to use and to tidy up after themselves.
- The teaching of early phonics (the sounds that letters make) in small ability groups is good. The staff make sure children's actions to make the letter shapes and sounds are memorable, and as a result they make good progress in learning to read. They enjoy reading books, and taking books home to share with their parents.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Children develop excellent attitudes to learning. They enter the nursery at the start of each session eager to explore the wide range of activities planned for them. They are active learners who relish finding things out for themselves, and many delight in sharing their learning with adults and other children.
- Staff are excellent role models and everybody is treated with the greatest respect. Staff, parents, carers and children know and understand the school's routines and policies, and the procedures for promoting high standards of behaviour are applied consistently well. Children are exceptionally cooperative with adults. The effective settling-in routine at the start of a session, undertaken with parents and carers, of signing in and selecting an activity, means the children start the session calmly and are ready to learn.
- Children play happily together, sharing resources and taking turns as they have been taught to do. For example, each child in a small group playing together waited for each other's train to go by before taking their turn.
- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding. Children's confidence is based upon their strong feelings of safety and security within the nursery environment. They have complete trust in the adults who look after them and keep them safe. Parents unanimously agree that their children are safe in the nursery, and that the effective transition arrangements and strong relationships with staff are key to this. As a consequence, it is not surprising that the children attend regularly and arrive on time.
- Children learn to take small risks and work out how to keep themselves and others safe. For

example, they wait on the play equipment until others have completed their jump, and use scissors carefully when cutting tape to stick letters in their home-school diary.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher knows the strengths of the school well, and identifies accurately actions to secure continuous improvement. He is supported exceptionally well by the lead teacher, skilled governors and a committed staff team. Together they demonstrate, through improving teaching and progress, that they have the capacity to improve the school still further. For example, they responded swiftly to recommendations for independent reviews of the school, most recently the extension to the outdoor area, and more focused checking of teaching.
- The setting of targets for adults to improve their work is effective and findings from observations and discussions are used to identify where further training is needed. Effective checking of staff performance has ensured that the quality of teaching, assessment, observation and planning continue to improve and all staff are determined to be the best they can be.
- Staff are able to access additional training with others from the family of schools for which the headteacher is responsible, in addition to that provided within the school. Leaders are not yet making full use of this to spread outstanding practice in teaching.
- The school's partnership with parents and carers is a significant strength. They are extremely positive about the way the school works, the progress their children make, and how it helps them to understand their children's learning. In questionnaires they overwhelmingly agreed that they would recommend the school to others.
- Good teamwork enables information about children to be shared, so all staff are aware of children's needs and interests. However, detailed analysis of the progress of all groups of children on which to base general priorities for improvement is not yet fully established.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body fulfils legal requirements for ensuring that the school is a safe place, and that staff are suitably checked and trained in child protection matters. Governors are increasingly well informed about the quality of teaching, the management of staff performance and how staff pay relates to their effectiveness. They check data on children's progress and have a good understanding of how well the nursery is doing. Governors play an important role in decision making, based on first-hand information on the quality of teaching and the children's achievement. They maintain a good grasp of the school's work by undertaking focused visits to the school and holding the senior leadership team to account. However, the analysis of some data about particular groups of children does not fully support them in this role. They make sure that decisions about how to use funds available are rational and in the best interests of the children, for example in the further development of the outdoor area.

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	119901
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	424957

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Samantha Tebbatt
Headteacher	Colin Bowpitt
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2010
Telephone number	01162 773489
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