

# Kendal Nursery School

Queens Road, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 4PH

**Inspection dates** 14–15 October 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- School leadership, including governance, is inspirational and dedicated. Leaders and governors believe strongly that children and families deserve excellence and are determined this school will never stand still. Effective changes ensure teaching and achievement continue to be excellent.
- Teaching is outstanding because staff are, constantly trying new ideas and thinking of ways to enthuse children. As a result, children enjoy learning and are extending strongly their early skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Staff understand exactly how children learn and use their interests and passions to develop children's skills and knowledge.
- Children's learning is valued highly and progress is recorded meticulously both in individual 'Special Books' and by intricate wall displays. This is very time-consuming for practitioners and is not always useful as it often repeats the same information.
- The enthusiasm and excitement for learning are tremendous strengths of this school. The large, wooded garden is used to its full potential, creating an exciting and adventurous world for children to learn in.
- Adults have very high expectations of children. Time is spent establishing routines and supporting children in following them. As a result, children's behaviour is outstanding.
- The opportunities for play are wonderful and imaginative. In a challenging garden area, children show confidence, determination and a very good understanding of how to stay safe.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is expertly enhanced. They learn tolerance and respect for each other and the environment in a highly nurturing atmosphere.
- All children receive high-quality support in their learning and, as a result, make very good progress from their individual starting points. Achievement is outstanding, with many children beginning to read and write by the time they leave nursery.
- The school is justifiably proud of its standing in the town and in the broader education community in Cumbria. Excellent partnership working means that expertise is shared widely.
- Parents are full of praise for the school and feel that it is a very special place for their children. They are happy their children are receiving the best possible preparation for their next stage of education.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed all or part of eight sessions in the nursery. The headteacher took part in a shared observation with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at a sample of children's 'Special Books'. She also looked at samples of information sent to the primary schools children move on to.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, members of staff, representatives from the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 15 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the most recent school questionnaire for parents. She also talked to some parents.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents including data on children's progress, reports on teaching and documentation relating to welfare and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Nora Waugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average nursery school. Children attend part time for three hours each morning or afternoon, or for two and a half days at either the beginning or the end of the week.
- Most children attend nursery from the term after their third birthday until transferring to the Reception class of one of several local primary schools.
- Most children are of White British heritage. A very small minority of children speak English as an additional language.
- Currently, only two children are supported at early years action plus. There are no children with a statement of special educational needs. A lower-than-average number of children receive extra help in nursery, usually to support their speech and language needs.
- Since September this year, the school has been resourced to provide two places, if needed, for children with complex needs. As yet, these two places have not been taken up.
- The school is located in a large Victorian house with many original features and extensive gardens. This building is shared with Brantfield Day Nursery which is run by the governing body. It is subject to a separate Ofsted inspection.
- The school works closely with Kendal West Children's Centre, which delivers services from the site.
- The school is a strategic partner in the Queen Katherine Teaching School Alliance and, through this, has been designated as an Early Years Hub in a national pilot project.
- The school has Healthy School Status.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Check on the amount of information collected about children's learning to ensure it is both manageable and useful in telling the story of their achievement in nursery.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- Exceptionally strong teamwork underpins the development of this outstanding nursery school. Led by an inspirational headteacher and supported by the highly effective governing body, everyone shares a philosophy dedicated to helping children and families. This is a vibrant community with respect for children at its heart.
- Leaders know the school very well. They have a very accurate view of its strengths and what can be developed further. Priorities are carefully identified and actions put in place. Close checks ensure that they are making the intended difference. Middle leaders are very effective in implementing these priorities in the nursery.
- Children's learning and progress are continuously reviewed. Support is provided where it is most needed. Practitioners reflect on what has worked well and what can help to improve learning further. Recently, much thought has gone into encouraging boys to write more with the result that boys now write enthusiastically, for example, making maps and planning an adventure.
- The checking on teachers' performance is thorough and sits alongside other regular checks on progress made by leaders. Teachers have targets based on children's progress and the achievement of targets is linked to salary rewards. Training is used very well to help the school move forward. Staff, already well qualified, are encouraged to achieve further qualifications.
- Partnerships are a very important aspect of the school. Excellent leadership and support are provided for the other partners on site including the daycare. Further afield, being involved in the Early Years Hub and the Queen Katherine Teaching School Alliance has brought exciting opportunities to take a strong role in promoting outstanding practice across the region.
- Parents cannot praise the nursery highly enough and the way their children gain confidence and blossom there. They value the opportunities for children and the exceptional care given. One parent summed up the views of many by explaining that her child had so much fun just enjoying the freedom. Parents are happy to be involved in the school and very supportive.
- The curriculum is excellent. The breadth of opportunities, experiences and challenges children can access in the garden or on 'The Wild Side', which is an additional incredible section of the grounds where children can feel they are deep in the woods. The activities indoors balance and build on this special strength. Everything is carefully organised so all children work at times in small groups or with adults, developing specific skills as well as following their own interests. A range of visits, such as one to a children's ballet, and visitors, enhance the curriculum further.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The time spent outdoors quickly fosters an appreciation of nature, opportunities to observe the changes in autumn with wonder and to be fascinated by the smallest creature. Children rapidly learn to work together collaboratively, supporting one another. This is a school with a strong commitment to equality of opportunity, ensuring the needs of all children are met.
- Safeguarding meets requirements. All policies and procedures to keep children safe and to protect those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are securely in place and regularly reviewed to ensure they are still effective.
- The school has a very close relationship with the local authority and greatly values its support.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body adds significantly to the strength of school leadership and governors are justifiably proud of how well they know the school. They are very knowledgeable about how children's learning is helped to develop and the effectiveness of teaching. Information about children's progress is reviewed and governors know how well children achieve. They are fully involved in assessing the school's strengths and in discussing possible priorities. While not afraid to ask challenging questions, they prefer to work collaboratively, supporting the development of ideas from an early stage.
  - Governors look carefully at their own skills and what they, as a governing body, need to do to develop further. Governors are very accessible to the wider community and run an annual barbecue for families where parents can ask them questions.
  - Governors take their responsibilities very seriously and check that all statutory requirements are met. They are very knowledgeable about safeguarding and are confident that the systems in place work well. They ensure financial management is sound, including making sure that staff have attained their targets before receiving salary rewards.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. All staff have very high expectations of how children should behave and spend time expertly supporting children as they learn to be part of a group. Children who have only been in school for six weeks could clearly explain what they are expected to do and why.
- Children's enthusiasm for learning is striking and a significant strength of the school. Their well-being and confidence are very high. Children come into school with happy smiles and cannot wait to discover what the day will bring. Their concentration is intense at times.
- Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Adults respect one another and children. They model exactly how to behave with each other and, as a result, children are remarkably polite and thoughtful. A child who made a picture 'for a friend I haven't seen before' represented a world where everyone is a potential friend.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The physical environment is challenging with stairs inside and outside steep slopes, more steps and logs and trees to climb. Children are taught carefully how to explore the whole area while staying safe. They show each other how to hold on to a fence to get up a slope or work out they need to crawl to move along a tree trunk. Adults watch carefully but have a lot of trust in children. The sense of achievement children feel when accomplishing what they have set out to do is wonderful.
- Parents are very confident their children are safe in school. A nurturing, caring approach is fully embedded and allows each child to have the care and support they need to become secure and happy in school. Where additional help is needed, relationships with the Children's Centre and other agencies are very good and allow this to be accessed quickly.
- Attendance is good with any unexplained absences being followed up quickly.

**The quality of teaching is outstanding**

- Children thoroughly enjoy learning and adults enjoy helping them to do so. Practitioners have a very good understanding of how children learn and what they need to do to help them learn more. This leads to teaching that is consistently good with many outstanding aspects.
- Staff watch children very carefully to see what they can do and where their interests lie. This information is used extremely well to plan exciting activities to build on these interests and teach the skills children need to move their learning forward. Learning is often fun and very exciting as when mixing colours in the water, making medicines for the vets, or when finding leaves to add to the 'muddy puddle soup'.
- Relationships are very friendly. Nursery is a calm place to learn. Practitioners quietly probe children's thinking with skilful questions, encouraging them to take that step further in developing their own ideas. Incidental opportunities to extend learning are consistently used successfully. Adults model language very well and are experts at giving children time to respond and talk to each other.
- At times children work in groups led by an adult to learn about taking turns, joining in a story or to play games. At other times, planned activities like threading leaves or retelling *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* develop children's physical skills or language at the right level for each child. Teachers enhance children's literacy skills by actively encouraging them to try and record, by drawing or writing, what they have done.
- The school has worked hard to develop children's early reading, writing and mathematical skills and teachers now integrate them completely into everyday activities. Children describe size and shape as part of physical play outside or write a 'story board' describing how they made a stage school the previous day. Skills are now embedded in everyday opportunities and, as a result, almost all children achieve very well in these skills and are very well prepared for the next steps in their learning.
- Teachers fully exploit the incredible outdoor environment and promote adventure and imagination. The garden is mature and full of tangled trees and hidden corners. Carefully designed sheds, shelters and a yurt extend the possibilities for learning even further. Children thrive on the innovative and magical opportunities offered. They glow with pride at finding conkers. Gathering apples, moving cautiously past brambles and sitting around a fire add to the special experiences offered.
- Children's progress is recorded in their 'Special Books'. The staff have worked hard to make these consistent and informative. They also document learning in great detail in displays, showing how interests have developed across time. These are beautiful but are very time-consuming. They do not always serve a useful purpose because of some duplication in the information on display and that within children's individual books, and this reduces the effectiveness of the system.

**The achievement of pupils is outstanding**

- Children enter nursery with a variety of starting points but, overall, their skills, knowledge and understanding are broadly similar to that typical for their age.
- While in nursery, almost all children make good or outstanding progress. This is because teaching is skilful and extremely well matched to the abilities of individual children and their needs. By the time they leave nursery, almost all children are achieving at or above typical levels for their age and a few are achieving significantly better than that. They have well-developed skills, ready for starting school.
- Enhancing children's personal development and establishing confidence and well-being are the first focus points for the nursery. Outstanding teaching means that within a few weeks, most children are enthusiastic and confident learners who are rapidly becoming very independent and work well with their friends.
- Promoting physical development and communication and language are given the highest priority. In an environment that lends itself to developing physical skills like jumping, running and climbing, care is taken to also ensure children learn to use tools, to handle pencils and to use scissors competently. Talk is encouraged everywhere and one notable aspect of this school is how well children chat to each other while playing.
- The improvements in children's mathematical development that were previously a priority have been sustained. Children's precise use of mathematical language is noticeable and opportunities for counting or developing early calculation skills are taken whenever they arise.
- Children enjoy reading and rapidly develop a very good understanding of books. They enjoy sitting and sharing stories with friends and know that books give us information. Children's writing is very good and even younger children will try writing their names or read their writing.
- Underpinning the consistently high achievement is the careful checking of children's progress. Each term, the headteacher checks progress across the whole nursery and discusses with individual carers how they are meeting the needs of all the children in their group.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress from their starting points because they are identified early and given careful support that meets their needs extremely well.
- The few children for whom English is an additional language achieve very well. They receive help to first understand and then speak English. The use of puppets and actions to support language learning helps these children learn quickly.
- Girls achieve better than boys overall but a lot of effort has been put into closing the gap, particularly in writing. In nursery, boys enjoy reading and writing as much as girls because they can do so in ways that make sense to them.
- Challenge for the most able children is high and they make excellent progress. They are encouraged to develop reading, writing and mathematical skills through play and, by the time they start school, they are learning about letters and sounds. Some are beginning to write simple sentences and working at levels higher than those typical for their age.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	112091
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	448122

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	62
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Vivien Kincey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Veronica Broyd
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 March 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01539 730800
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