



Inspection report

Countesthorpe Nursery School

Unique Reference Number 119901
LEA Leicestershire

Inspection number 269353
Inspection dates 10 - 11 November 2004
Reporting inspector Jane Wotherspoon HMI

Inspection carried out under section 3 of the School Inspection Act 1996, and was deemed section 10 under the same act.

Type of School	Nursery School	School address	The Drive
School category	Maintained		Countesthorpe
Age range of pupils	3 - 4		Leicester
			LE8 5PB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0116 2773489
Number on roll	41	Fax number	
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr David Jennings
Date of previous inspection	December 1998	Headteacher	Mrs Janet Jones

Age group	Published	Reference no.
3 - 4	December 2004	269353

Introduction

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of Countesthorpe Nursery School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The nursery is in the village of Countesthorpe, south of Leicester. It is small, with 25 part-time morning or afternoon places. A small number of the 41 children have special educational needs. Few are from ethnic minorities and all speak English as their first language. The school's assessments, made within the first two weeks of starting, show that many children do not have the skills and knowledge typical of three-year olds. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2002 and both nursery nurses started in September 2003. The headteacher is the only qualified teacher and teaches full time in addition to her headship responsibilities. The school provides care for children aged from three to eight before and after school hours, and for nursery children at lunchtime.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Overall effectiveness of the school

This is an effective school. The headteacher's view of the school is accurate. Children achieve well in the calm, but busy, atmosphere. There are plenty of interesting things to do in the bright and stimulating environment. Children behave well and the oldest have very positive attitudes to learning. Parents say they don't want to come home! Teaching is good and children are looked after well by a team of caring and supportive staff who value them and celebrate their achievements. The headteacher leads her team effectively. Good monitoring procedures are becoming established and management systems are sound. The school gives good value for money.

Grade: 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The key issues from the last inspection have been tackled effectively with good improvement made on raising standards in literacy and mathematics. Standards generally have improved and children make good progress. The quality of teaching is better than reported previously. The outdoor area has been developed successfully. Good behaviour and attitudes have been sustained.

Grade: 2

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is an accurate reflection of the nursery's main strengths and areas for development. The school improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities and sets out clear actions. The headteacher offers staff a sense of direction and purpose and has a good capacity to sustain improvements.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the analysis of assessment information to evaluate the achievement of children and to identify more precisely what needs to be improved.
- Strengthen systems for recording what is planned for children's activities to identify:
 - different levels of challenge in activities led by adults
 - what children are expected to learn from the activities they choose.

Achievement and standards

Children's achievement is good overall although the school's assessment information shows that it is not always even across all areas of learning. Progress in mathematical and creative development is not as strong as in other areas. It is very good in personal, social and emotional development, and in physical development. Children who have special educational needs make very good progress, as do many girls.

Children make good progress in speaking and in early reading and writing skills. They enjoy stories, listening attentively and responding to the humour. For example, children laughed with glee at the dog skeleton from the Funnybones story who couldn't bark properly and said 'Wooffoow' because his bones had been put together backwards. Children recognise their names, are learning letter sounds and practise writing as they pretend to be a doctor making out a prescription for a patient in the hospital.

Children are developing very good physical skills. They handle small objects and tools with good co-ordination. Outside, they steer large wheeled toys with good control and awareness of space. Several children ride bicycles without stabilisers. Despite the speed at which they zoom around the playground, children avoid each other successfully and have a good awareness of safety. They enjoy the exercise and fresh air.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

Children have very positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy being at the nursery and attend regularly. They follow the routines at the start of the day and most are happy to say good-bye to their parents; they know that they will be looked after. Behaviour is consistently good. Children are developing good social skills and love to share their favourite activities with their best friends. They are curious to learn. Through the current theme of 'people who help us', children show they are learning to keep themselves safe. They learn to care for others, the environment and animals such as the resident guinea pigs.

Many children take responsibility for small tasks around the nursery, such as tidying up and looking after resources. The oldest children, who are due to leave at the end of term, are well prepared for the next stage of their school life. Staff encourage them to be independent, and many show initiative in fetching their own resources, such as the boy who went to the large toy store for a trailer to add to his tricycle so that he could tow his friend around. Two girls initiated an activity, and sustained a high level of concentration, as they painstakingly sorted all the small play people according to the design of their clothes, and then organised them into a repeating pattern in the tray.

Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Adult-led activities are planned with much thought and discussion. Staff are clear what they want children to learn at such times, although there is scope to improve the written planning which does not show how activities can be adapted for children of different abilities. In practice, adults are alert to children's individual needs and so provide an appropriate level of challenge or support. They do this instinctively in the way that they ask questions and in the language they use as they engage children in the activities.

Staff establish clear routines and expectations that help children to know how to behave. Children's achievements are celebrated in displays of work and through digital photos that are presented as a slide show to parents at the end of sessions. This is an excellent way of keeping parents in touch with what their child experiences. Computers are used regularly and effectively to reinforce children's learning and many are very competent in their use.

Assessment information is used effectively in planning. Staff make regular notes from their observations of what children know and can do. These are detailed and build up a comprehensive picture of each child's progress and what they need to learn next. Such conscientious record keeping alerts staff to any gaps in children's experiences so that a specific activity can be provided.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

A wide range of activities engages children's interest and fosters their enjoyment. Relevant and stimulating visits to places of interest and visitors to the nursery help to extend the work children do and give them different experiences. Staff offer children a good balance between the activities that they lead, and those that children choose. Each area of learning is covered well, although planning for the activities that children choose needs to be sharply focused on what they are expected to learn. Role-play activities have a high profile and are linked effectively to the theme for the week. Team planning is effective because all staff contribute their ideas and share expertise. Staff evaluate the daily activities to take account of children's responses when planning the next activities. They are alert to those children who always choose the same thing and encourage them to try different things. Staff organise resources effectively so that children can find them easily and so gain independence. The spacious outdoor area with its excellent climbing equipment is a firm favourite with children.

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support

The key-worker system is effective. Staff know children well and are sensitive to their individual needs. Children know who to go to if they have a concern or are upset. Their self-esteem and confidence is boosted by the strong relationships they share with the adults who care for them. Good systems for helping children to settle into nursery begin with the home visits that are much appreciated by the parents. Staff give children a good role model of friendship and team work, and intervene to help them find the right way of doing things, such as helping younger children to share resources with each other. Secure health and safety procedures are in place. They are well known to all staff, most of whom have had recent and relevant training. Staff encourage children to follow hygienic practices. The nursery has extended its provision to offer care for children before and after school and at lunchtime.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

The headteacher's clear vision for the nursery, set out in a five-year strategic plan, is underpinned by her strong commitment to meeting the needs of local children and their families. The governing body is starting to contribute soundly and systematically to the leadership and management of the nursery since being constituted last year. Some governors have monitored aspects of provision. Financial systems for managing the newly delegated budget are appropriate.

The many staff changes have been managed well. Staff work together very effectively as a team and this ensures the smooth running of the nursery. Significant changes to the environment and to the planning and organisation of the curriculum have been led effectively by the headteacher. Good assessment systems are in place and the information is used to monitor children's progress and to identify where individuals need more support or challenge.

The headteacher is beginning to use achievement data to evaluate the nursery's effectiveness and to identify areas for improvement. The annual school improvement plan contains a good range of priorities with appropriate actions. There is scope for further analysis to provide greater precision in identifying what needs to improve.

Grade: 2

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