



Lark Hill Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106016
LEA Stockport
Inspection number 277467
Inspection dates 10 May 2006 to 10 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Geoffrey Yates CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Northgate Road
School category	Community		Edgeley
Age range of pupils	3 to 5		Stockport, Cheshire SK3 9PH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 4800867
Number on roll	47	Fax number	0161 4299254
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Lees
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Joanne O'Raw

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Lark Hill is a small Nursery school situated in the outskirts of Stockport. Most children attend part time and some attend full time. The percentage of children whose first language is not English is low. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Attainment on entry is below the levels expected for children of this age.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2005. The school's population has diminished over the years. However, the school is about to become a Children's Centre and is working hard with interested partners to ensure a smooth transition.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features and provides good value for money. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. The provision for children's personal development and some aspects of care, guidance and well-being are outstanding, and all other aspects good. Inspection findings agree with the views of parents that this is a happy school where children enjoy the wide range of exciting activities. The good curriculum makes good use of the very well planned outside area. All children make good progress, most from below expected starting points. They achieve well because of good teaching from both teachers and nursery assistants, resulting in average attainment when children leave. The school is well led and managed; governors provide good support and the headteacher provides good leadership. In a relatively short period of time since her appointment the HT has improved further the quality of education. Care, guidance and support are good overall. New systems for assessing and tracking learning have been put in place but the school rightly recognises that more work still needs to be done to ensure optimum effectiveness. The school runs smoothly but the quality of the ICT systems for administration leaves much to be desired.

Staff work well as a team. They value the support of parents, all of whom have been fully consulted about the school's new vision statement. Induction arrangements are satisfactory but do not currently include provision for home visits prior to children starting school. The school has good capacity to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the use of assessment information to ensure that children make the best possible progress.
- Extend the school's induction arrangements.
- Take all possible steps to improve the quality of the ICT administrative systems resources.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When the children start school, most have skills below those typical of three-year-olds. They make good progress and, by the time they leave, most children meet the expected learning goals for their age. Achievement is good because of good teaching, the attention given to individual needs, combined with an interesting and stimulating curriculum. For example, during the inspection, the children enjoyed the challenge of taking on the role of pirates, dressed in suitable costumes. This really stimulated a group of children to develop and improve their language skills. Very good provision for personal, social, emotional and physical development ensures children achieve well in these important aspects of their learning. Assessment information shows that the school adds good value to each child's learning during their short time in the school. This includes children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, gifted and talented

children and those learning English as an additional language. Recent analysis of assessment information demonstrated that children were not achieving as well as they could in letter and number recognition. Provision was quickly changed with the result that both aspects have improved and standards are now typical of children of a similar age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. Attendance is good and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are of a high quality. Parents say that their children are happy and do well at school. This aspect was evidenced when on a very warm Spring morning, all children showed full involvement and excitement in the outdoor activities provided. Children show a tremendous determination to want to learn and a clear sense of independence. For example, they enjoy the challenge of trying to write their own name by mark making when self registering for school. Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, resulting in very positive attitudes. All members of staff set very good examples for the children, especially with regard to consideration for others and in working and playing safely. As a result, children look after resources well and are concerned when, for example, one of their classmates is momentarily frightened by a pop-up toy. The good child-centred curriculum helps children to appreciate the importance of thinking of others less fortunate than themselves and of learning about their own and other cultures. Learning experiences include thinking about the work of the Red Cross and raising funds, celebrating Eid, Christian festivals and learning about the Chinese New Year. There is good provision for children to learn the importance of a healthy lifestyle, to contribute to the community and to develop the basic skills needed for their future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff work very well as a team, ensuring consistency in learning for all children. Well planned activities ensure that good quality learning is sustained. In the best instances, exciting activities capture the children's imagination, making learning great fun. For example, children really enjoyed making hand and foot prints using red powder paint as part of the school's 'Red Cross Day' activities. Recent improvements in assessment systems have improved staff knowledge of individual children. There are many good features in the assessment systems but some aspects need further refinement. An outstanding feature of teaching is the use made of 'events sampling' (gathering of significant information about a child and how they react to learning opportunities) to really focus on children's learning. This information is shared at the weekly meetings when planning for new learning takes place. The teachers very good use of questions develops children's language skills

well. However, when taught by other adults, children are occasionally allowed to nod rather than answer and this limits the progress they make. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good adult support to help them achieve as well as they can. The small number of children who speak English as an additional language are fully integrated into all activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets national guidance and is of a good quality. Lively and stimulating learning tasks match children's needs effectively. Children love to join in the many opportunities provided for them to sing. The way children are grouped and the good numbers of staff mean that children are usually engaged in talk with adults in most activities, and this promotes their good progress. The curriculum is adapted well to meet children's differing abilities and this aspect is improving as assessment develops. The school successfully integrates the teaching of basic skills into many aspects of the school day and has a good range of resources. An impressive and well planned outside area is fully integrated into the curriculum. Regular visitors and visits to places of interest, such as local shops and the seaside, extend children's understanding of the world. The school takes an active part in ensuring children are aware of the need to stay healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care and support for children is outstanding and support for guiding their academic development is good; but assessment systems still need to be refined. The school is a welcoming and happy place. One parent commented, 'kids really do learn things - they are not just here to play'. Staff know the children and their families very well, enabling them to provide an excellent level of care. Both parents and children are greeted on entry and parents are encouraged to stay with their children until they feel they are settled. Parents say they have confidence in the quality of care. Adults who work in the school are highly skilled in caring for the children and giving them suitable guidance, responding sensitively to any concerns and needs. Child protection arrangements are in place. The school has good systems for keeping children safe. Although the children transfer to two different primary schools, they are well prepared for the move. Good links exist with other agencies, for example behavioural support teams.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has moved from the threat of closure to the point where it is about to become a Children's Centre. It is well placed to take on that responsibility. Leadership and management are both good, and a good quality team of staff contribute significantly to the good progress made by the children. The headteacher has a very

clear vision for school improvement and she shares this effectively with staff and governors. She has recently successfully introduced changes to the way phonics and number recognition are taught. New assessment systems have been introduced but these have yet to be refined. A source of frustration for the school is the lack of effective ICT administrative resources which means, for example, that email messages can not be accessed until nearly lunch time. The involvement of parents, staff and governors in drawing up a vision statement has been effective in bringing all groups closer together.

The school's self-evaluation is well founded and accurate. There is a positive ethos in the school and equal opportunities are promoted effectively. The governors are supportive of the school and have a good understanding of the school's priorities. The school values links with parents highly and has rightly identified that they need to improve induction arrangements by establishing home visits. Parents and carers are very happy with all the school provides and are pleased their views are taken into account. The school has successfully tackled the few issues that were raised at the previous inspection, and has good capacity to build on its success.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I enjoyed my visit to your school very much, especially on such a beautiful day. Thank you for helping me to find out all about your school. It was really good to see you and your teachers dressed in red to celebrate the work of the Red Cross.

I can see you really enjoy your school in the way you join in with the many exciting things that help you to learn. I will remember for a long time how good the pirates were in their costumes and I was really pleased they found the treasure! Your mums and dads think that the school is a good place to be and I agree with them. All the grown-ups in school really care about you and look after you very well. This helps you to feel happy and to enjoy learning. It is good that you like to run about and climb in the outside area and that you enjoy eating healthy foods at snack times. These will help to make you fit and healthy.

Your teachers plan lots of interesting things for you to do. They are good at checking how well you are learning and I have asked them to do more of this so that they can help you to learn even better. I have also asked the school to try to improve the computers in the office. Starting nursery can be quite worrying for some children, so I thought it might be helpful if teachers visited you and your families at home to help to prepare you for nursery.

I hope you carry on enjoying your school and working hard.