

Cleator Moor Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112088
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	289168
Inspection date	19 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Dave Byrne

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 on roll	77
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Holburt
Headteacher	Mrs Valerie Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2002
School address	Ennerdale Road Wath Brow Cleator Moor Cumbria CA25 5LW
Telephone number	01946 855039
Fax number	01946 855039

Age group	3-4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves an area with above average levels of deprivation. Children start school in the term after they reach three years of age and attend part-time for either morning or afternoon sessions. The attainment of the majority of children when they start school is well below what is typical for their age, with a particular weakness in communication, language and literacy. Almost all the children come from White British families, with a very small number from minority ethnic backgrounds who are at an early stage of learning English. A broadly average number of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, one of whom has a statement for special educational needs. The governing body took up fully delegated responsibilities in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that gives children an excellent start to their education. Children's progress is fundamental to everything that happens; staff have a highly developed appreciation of how the best learning occurs. This happens because the school is so skilfully led. The headteacher's vision burns brightly, and a hard-working staff share and implement this vision superbly well. Parents rightly hold the school in very high regard and feel the school is at the heart of the community.

Children love school. Their personal, social and emotional development progresses rapidly. It underpins their excellent behaviour and awareness of the need to eat sensibly and act safely. From the moment the doors open, the school's aim of providing a lively and exciting curriculum to meet every child's needs is pursued meticulously. Children go straight to purposeful, imaginative and absorbing tasks. They enjoy what they do and this is reflected in their regular attendance. Parents are often amazed at their children's self-assurance, which they say is because of the expert guidance they receive from the school.

Achievement is excellent. It is the rapid rate of progress in personal development and communication, language and literacy that underpins children's accomplishments in other areas. First-rate teaching builds on the children's abilities to play well together so that they extend and deepen their learning. By the time they leave, the large majority of children reach the level expected for their age in all areas of learning. It is only in aspects of using new technologies in learning, such as digital cameras, that children could do better. Children make significant strides in their communication, language and literacy. Children know some words and phrases when they arrive, but by the time they leave, many can talk and even write simple words about what they are doing with little support. Higher-attaining children forge ahead because each session contains many exciting challenges and avenues for them to explore. For example, they explore stages in the development of a butterfly and are fascinated by the stories and books they frequently share with staff and volunteer parents. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the few with English as an additional language thrive as well as others. The small steps that they make are evaluated so precisely that plans for future learning are fully effective.

Good governance makes sure the school meets all requirements. Finances are well managed to provide very high-quality accommodation and well-staffed classes. The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation is extremely good but it is too self-critical, given its outstanding features. It has improved well since the last inspection and has an excellent capacity to do so in future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the use of modern technology to support learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Outstanding achievement is demonstrated by children in their time in the school because of the first-rate provision they receive. The starting point of many children is well below that which is expected for their age. The weakest areas of attainment when they start Nursery are personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. In their time in the school, children make excellent progress and rapid improvements in their skills and

knowledge. By the time they are ready to move on to full-time education, the large majority of children have caught up so well that they reach the expected level for their age in all of their learning. A reasonable proportion exceed these expectations. They have started to recognise and write sounds and keywords, understand numbers up to five and develop a good knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make rapid progress, matching the outstanding rates of other children. Attainment for the small number with English as an additional language is slightly below expectations for their age but, given their limited English language on entry, this represents very good achievement. Boys tend to start school with lower attainment than girls. The school is aware of this and adapts its planned activities to manage this. As a result boys achieve as well as girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. They enjoy everything that they do. With wrists deep in a tray of water, fingers shaping play-dough and hands using brushes to explore paint, the delight on their faces and the excitement they show, tells it all. Outstanding behaviour and safe play are the norm. Children play imaginatively and thrive in the outdoor environment. Inside, they concentrate hard on tasks, confidently make choices and quickly become absorbed in teacher-led activities such as book-time. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Children showed wonder at the newly acquired 'class' tadpoles and derived excitement from working with a visiting musician. Social graces exhibited when at work and play are splendid: children are polite and confident. They are keen to eat well and enjoy the many opportunities to test their physical skills both outside and in. The very good levels of personal, social and emotional development coupled with the good basic academic skills fostered, prepare children extremely well for their future education. One parent typically said that her child was transformed from being shy and retiring into a confident and outgoing learner within days of being at the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Extremely stimulating and high quality displays in classrooms and around the school celebrate children's achievements. The teamwork amongst all staff is excellent, with the interests and various learning needs of the children at the forefront of planning. As a result of their commitment to training, staff have a superb understanding of how young children learn. This knowledge, coupled with excellent relationships and very effective staff deployment, is applied skilfully to meeting the needs of each child. Good levels of individual attention works exceptionally well for all children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and English as an additional language, who are set realistic and achievable goals. A strong feature of the teaching is the way staff seize opportunities to develop children's ideas by playing and exploring alongside them and using questions and comments to extend children's thinking. For instance, as a result of inspirational and very creative teaching, children were fascinated by aspects of the lifecycle of a butterfly and the features of different mini-beasts. Their interest and effective teaching helped ensure children made exceptional gains in their understanding. Computers are exploited well to develop pupils' skills and ideas, but the use of new technology is relatively underdeveloped, for example in the use of plasma screens and the wider application of camcorders and digital cameras. Assessment of children's

progress is very thorough. Parents are fully involved as they can share children's daily learning via good quality newsletters, frequent information about topics and regular, often daily, meetings with staff.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It is varied, rich and based on an excellent understanding of the learning needs of young children. Learning activities are exceptionally well planned and this supports children's excellent achievement. A rich and varied range of activities has been organised for the whole year. Children develop their understanding of their own, and other cultures, extremely effectively because the school plans projects which bring together different areas of learning at one time. The links created between areas of learning lead to children learning to connect their knowledge. Visits to places in the local environment, together with visitors and special events such as the recent arts and craft day, add richness to the curriculum and broaden children's horizons. Excellent links with external agencies extend children's learning. The curriculum includes plenty of opportunities for children to learn how to keep safe and healthy, such as daily outdoor physical activities and education on how to eat sensibly.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care guidance and support are outstanding. Staff care exceptionally well for the children and support families very effectively through Family Literacy and Healthy Living workshops. All procedures are in place for maintaining child protection, safeguarding and health and safety. Adults are sensitive and friendly and this helps to create an atmosphere in which children feel really secure and are eager to learn. Parents are unanimous in their praise for the deep knowledge staff have of their children. They value the way the school works with them and keeps them very well informed so that they can help their children at home. Children are gently guided in their work by skilled staff who know precisely how to help them make progress, in terms of both their personal and their academic development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are very effective and have an outstanding impact on the quality of education and the excellent levels of care. The headteacher, together with her senior staff, has successfully built a high-performing team who show great commitment to evaluating their practice and striving to improve it even further. Evaluation of the school's work is perceptive and self-critical, leaving no room for complacency. Consequently, the excellent achievement of children has been maintained in recent years. New initiatives have built upon this and led to the school gaining Healthy School accreditation. The headteacher has created a vibrant, happy ethos which is reflected in the highly imaginative curriculum and stimulating teaching. As a result, there are high levels of achievement by children of all abilities and backgrounds. Governors offer good and effective support and are becoming adept at assessing the school's work and in monitoring its initiatives. Finances are well managed, although the plan for using of the school's large budget surplus is not as precise as it needs to be. Staff and governors are very good at listening and responding to parents' views and children's needs are always put first.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 April 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Cleator Moor Nursery School, Cumbria, CA25 5LW

I enjoyed my visit to your Nursery very much. I really enjoyed watching some of the exciting things you do indoors and outdoors. I know your mums and dads think that your Nursery is a very special place and I agree with them.

There are lots of wonderful things about your Nursery. You work hard and help each other. Your teachers and helpers care about you very much and make learning really interesting and fun. Everyone in the Nursery is happy and friendly and they all work together to make it an exciting place for you. Anybody who needs extra help is always given it. Your headteacher is very clever at running the school and makes sure you enjoy your work and do well. You love learning new things and are very good at sharing, taking turns, talking and being kind to each other.

The adults who help you have lots of good ideas to make the Nursery even better. I suggested one thing that could make learning even more fun and that is to give all of you more chance to use modern games and computers.

It was great to see that you are all so happy and doing so well!

Yours sincerely

Mr Dave Byrne

Lead Inspector