



Appletree Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134991
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 294243
Inspection date 16 November 2006
Reporting inspector Delia Hiscock

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Milking Stile Lane
School category	Maintained		Lancaster, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	3–4		LA1 5QB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01524 64132
Number on roll (school)	48	Fax number	01524 64132
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Sue Clarke
		Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Wignall
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
3–4	16 November 2006	294243

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school opened in September 2005 to serve the edge of the city where there are some pockets of disadvantage. It also manages the Playbus for rural areas. Most children attend the Nursery part-time, either in the morning or afternoon, though a tiny proportion attends full-time. Levels of attainment on entry to the school vary, but are close to the national expectations. Most of the children are White British and a small proportion of children of minority ethnic heritage families are learning English as an additional language. A tiny proportion of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Proposals are in place to develop the Nursery into a Children's Centre.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This effective Nursery school provides good value for money. There are several features of the school's work that are outstanding, even though the school is only in its second year of existence. The excellent leadership of the headteacher has sourced best practice from far and wide to develop high quality provision for the children and their families. This work has happened very quickly and successfully since the school opened. To bring this about, school leaders have capitalised on local expertise and experience. They have steered a smooth but uncompromising pathway, in the pursuit of excellence to make sure that the children receive a really good start to their education. Shared professional development and lots of discussion has aligned this hard-working staff in their ways of working. They have set up an outstanding curriculum that develops the children's personal skills really well and helps them to grow in independence, creativity and understanding, to the great satisfaction of parents and carers.

The children's well-being is central. Even the youngest three year olds, who have recently started attending are beginning to blossom as they make forays into the more unfamiliar parts of the Nursery. Older children say that they like coming to school. Their growing self esteem and confidence are reflected in the help they offer to their younger counterparts. The headteacher, whose role is widening, has made good headway in preparing the school for the extended services of the proposed Children's Centre. Perceptive management and diligent governance provides a wide range of expertise for support, and have deployed staff effectively during this on-going period of change.

The result of this shared work is seen in the good progress the children make in all the areas of learning. By the time the children leave to start in their Reception Year in school, standards attained match those expected of children of their age and are higher in several aspects of their personal and social development, knowledge and understanding and creative development. This is because in these areas, the children achieve very well, though systems are not fully in place to track the children's progress and gauge whether they all reach their highest potential. Nevertheless, the breath of experience and skills they gain stand them in good stead for their future learning.

The reason for this good progress and achievement is that the quality of teaching and learning is good. The attraction of exciting activities and just the right degree of adult intervention encourages the children to want to be there. The quality of care and support the children receive is excellent, so the children settle quickly and grow in confidence.

The school's evaluation is accurate in judging the impact of its provision and has wisely estimated the measure of its success. It is very well placed to capitalise on these developments, having made exceptional progress since opening and with a strong team that make all the difference.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop assessment systems that help the school to help ensure that the children achieve their highest potential.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and progress are good. Children reach standards that are broadly average for their age, and above that which is typical in aspects of their personal, social and emotional development, in creative development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. This is because the most progress is made where staff plan opportunities to develop independence, imagination and wonder. They do this by harnessing cleverly matched props to the children's experiences of life. This helps them to explore new territory, to make decisions for themselves and to deepen their understanding by re-visiting the comfortingly familiar. Realistic props such as a supermarket scanner, the big computer screen, and an extensive range of natural objects and expressive media, all help the children become curious about the world around them and gain the skills for the future, including those for information and communications technology (ICT). A range of electronic equipment, including remote control devices are used very well to develop children's understanding, and their language and number skills. The gains made by children who are learning English as an additional language and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are equally positive because the support they receive enables them to make good steps forward. At this early stage in the school's development, children's progress is recorded but the systems are not in place yet ensure that all the children are reaching their highest potential.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and their well-being are excellent, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, the children self serve their snacks freely, and often sit quietly with one or two of their classmates whilst eating them. They behave very sensibly, and can often be seen taking a moment to think. They demonstrate that they are learning to eat healthily. They use tools safely, and get involved in lots of activities that broaden their experiences of the world. This is because they are provided with healthy snacks, encouraged in conversation and expectations of their growing independence and widening knowledge are very well matched to their needs. Where children need a little help, adults model polite behaviour and manners. Attendance is encouraged and well monitored by checks on absent children. Older children grow in responsibility and help the younger ones to settle, and show them how to tidy away. The very good progress the children make means that they are well placed to continue enjoying their education, and develop the skills they need for life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The children's learning is at the heart of the school's work. Typically, the staff prompt children to think and talk by sensitively posing questions or forging helpful links between ideas. The children can then pursue their interests productively. Teaching supports this through very well organised areas that encourage the children to be independent, purposeful and curious. The very good props for learning are so well deployed that the children independently source what they need, learn to negotiate with others, and are stimulated to gain many early skills as they do so. This is because centrally located planning is focused on the ways that children learn best. This innovation is beginning to help the staff to pick up on the children's responses quickly so that they can best plan follow up activities. In developing their skills and interpreting the shared teaching and learning plans, the staff have made impressive use of the training they have undertaken to facilitate learning in this way. With this success under their belt and with some good experience of assessing the significant moments of the children's learning, staff are becoming more aware of the children that could be challenged further. The children who are learning English as an additional language benefit from good models of spoken English and those with learning difficulties and disabilities respond well to the small steps planned in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding curriculum. Many aspects of the exciting and interlinking activities promote the excellent development of children's personal qualities and skills, and above all, their enjoyment. Visitors, including specialist teachers in dance and movement, play a strong part in developing children's knowledge, understanding and practical skills. Throughout the day, the benefits of healthy eating, exercise and safe behaviour are emphasised. The excellent outdoor area extends that inside and provides the children and adults with the opportunity to transform the various frames and structures into make-believe small worlds, to go on a journey or to explore uncharted ideas. This extends learning imaginatively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Provision for care and support is excellent and the children and parents are very happy with that provided. The children develop relationships harmoniously and calmly because adults provide good models. Good guidance, arising from experienced use of observation by staff, builds well on links with families and with outside agencies but could provide more challenge for the older or developmentally mature children. Developing transition work with schools is

starting to benefit the children's induction to their Reception Year. Procedures to safeguard children are in place, including child protection, safety and premises security. Procedures to monitor attendance encourage and monitor absence effectively and prompt interventions if a child is absent and there is no notification. The children's personal achievements are celebrated, and are shared with parents and carers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The Nursery's ambitious vision to provide 'an excellent Children's Centre with lifelong learning as a focus' is progressing very well in establishing partnerships and in setting clear directions. This is because the leadership and insight of the headteacher is outstanding. She has a powerful and creative vision for the future that has children's personal development, well-being and learning at the heart. The successful work of the school is founded on extensive experience on the part of the headteacher and key staff, who understand how young children learn best. They have worked relentlessly to bring this about. To reach this position of strength in a relatively short time, the school has benefited from the good support of the community, parents, staff, new governors, and the excellent external partnerships. Governance has an extensive range of expertise to call upon and is a competent support for the school. Improvement planning and performance management are effective tools that demonstrate the strategic approaches that keep the children at the heart of all the intentions during this period of proposed expansion. The use of grants is astute and promotes important areas such as transition arrangements and local partnerships, to benefit local children. Some of this work, undertaken by middle management is newly established and has not had time to take effect.

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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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	NA

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	2

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
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

Appletree Nursery School

Milking Stile Lane

Lancaster

Lancashire

LA1 5QB

16 November 2006

Dear Children

Hello again. How are you all? I really enjoyed my visit to your school. Do you remember seeing me in your classroom? I had a lovely time. I watched you making things, playing outside and listening to your teachers. You did have a good time!

I came to see if you like your school and what helps you the most. I found your Nursery to be a good one, just like you and your mums, dads, and helpers think.

All the grown-ups work hard for you. They make things fun. You are looked after really well too. Is that why you are such good children? I could see that you are learning to tidy up after yourself and you have all learned to have your drink and fruit sensibly. Well done!

Guess what? I have asked your Nursery to work out how much you learn. What have you learned today? Who will you tell? Perhaps you can tell your teacher? Or maybe you might like to tell your favourite toy?

I hope you have a lovely day.

Best wishes

Mrs Delia Hiscock

School Inspector