

Pen Green Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131232
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	295451
Inspection date	5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Barbara Crane

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	
School	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elaine Young
Headteacher	Heather Donoyou
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Pen Green Lane Corby NN17 1BJ
Telephone number	01536 400068
Fax number	01536 463977

Age group	3-4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Pen Green Nursery is part of a well established Children's Centre and is the provider for three to four year olds. It combined with a private not-for-profit nursery to form a new maintained nursery school for up to 80 full-time equivalent children in September 2006. The Children's Centre has a wide range of extended services for children and their families. Pen Green serves an area in which many families face challenging circumstances. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. A few children are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Children's attainment when they start the Nursery is well below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding Nursery gives children a first rate start to their education and excellent preparation for the future. Parents appreciate the difference that the Nursery makes to their children's progress and confidence. As one parent put it, 'The staff go the extra mile. Nothing is too much trouble for them. It is like having another family.' Teaching is excellent and the staff have high hopes for the children. They use their thorough knowledge of how children learn best to adapt activities to meet each individual's needs. Consequently, children's achievement is outstanding. They make great strides in their learning and so most are on course to meet most of goals for their age by the time they leave the Nursery. The ease of communication between the staff and parents leads to a high level of support for children's sense of well-being and security. The Nursery taps into the wide range of support and advice from the extended support available from the Children's Centre to further benefit children and their families. The outstanding care, support and guidance provided by the staff foster children's excellent personal development. Children flourish in a happy and trusting atmosphere because of the warmth of relationships. Their enjoyment in being with each other and the staff is evident at the start of each session as they greet each other.

The curriculum is excellent and the staff and children share great excitement in learning. Every day is a new adventure, with things to explore and investigate. The staff make sure that children are full partners in deciding what happens in each session because adults follow children's interests and ideas. As a result, children are fired up for learning new things. Excellent resources stimulate children's curiosity and adults' questioning and guidance help them to see possibilities that push the boundaries of their learning. There are slightly fewer opportunities for children to use information and communication technology (ICT) to develop their learning because resources are not at such a high level.

Outstanding leadership and management ensure that children come first and that all benefit from what the Nursery offers them. The senior leaders make the most of their diverse talents. All staff look for ways to improve and share their practice. Professional development is extremely well planned to support improvements in teaching and learning. Careful checks on how well things are going mean that the Nursery has a clear and accurate view of its effectiveness and what it needs to work on next. Everyone shares the same vision and works with a passion to get the best for children. The Nursery's excellent capacity to improve is reflected in the way that it has ensured consistency in high quality of provision and children's progress following its amalgamation in 2006.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for children to use ICT to extend their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children progress at a fast rate from a well below average starting point when they join the Nursery. Their outstanding achievement means that most are working within the goals for their age in all areas of learning by the time they leave. This excellent progress is seen amongst all groups of children, including those who have learning difficulties and those who are learning English as an additional language. The level of challenge built into teaching ensures that children who can go further in their learning do so. Children's early skills in language, literacy and

mathematics expand rapidly through careful teaching and plenty of opportunities to practise newly learned skills in exciting situations. Their personal, social and emotional development is supported through sensitive intervention that builds children's confidence and self-reliance. High quality work in the creative area of learning results from adults' flexibility in following children's ideas. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world develops extremely well through adults' timely questions that probe children's thinking.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's attendance is excellent and they cannot wait to get started when they come into each session. Their secure early skills in their work, as well as their excellent awareness of keeping safe and healthy, set them up very well for the next stage of their education. They are very physically active and enjoy the healthy snacks and meals provided. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Children's exemplary behaviour goes a long way to creating the Nursery's happy sense of community. Children see the advantages of keeping to the simple rules and show respect for each other and adults. Good manners are the norm, reflecting adults' high expectations and the example they set for children to follow. Children persevere with tasks because they enjoy what they do. They are delighted by the new discoveries they make with their friends and confidently take risks within a safe environment. This was evident when a small group arranged ropes to create a framework for swinging from the bridge that connects the outdoor areas.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The staff enjoy teaching as much as the children enjoy learning. The consistency of approach by all adults leads to children's feeling of security and is reassuring to parents. High quality teaching results from the staff's thorough understanding of the different rates and ways in which children learn. Adults use what they learn from observing children's individual progress very effectively to build new challenge into activities. They reflect on what children have learned each day and adapt their planning to follow children's interests and ideas. Consequently children are very keen to learn and eagerly share their thoughts and ideas. The staff have the knack of knowing exactly the point at which they should intervene to extend children's learning. Children with learning difficulties benefit from precise teaching that meets their needs very well. Consequently, their rate of learning matches that of others. Children who are learning English as an additional language get exactly what they need to make rapid progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

There is an excellent rhythm to the day, with times of very active learning interspersed with quieter and more reflective times. The indoor and outdoor environment is full of opportunities for children to explore subtleties of images, colour, light, texture and language. The outdoor areas are exceptionally well resourced to allow children to use different levels to explore space and materials such as sand and water in whatever ways their imagination leads them. One group, for example, built a volcano shape from sand and inserted a hose pipe to create a lava flow. A wealth of visits to places such as the Science Museum in London, as well as places closer to

hand, stimulates children's interest in the wider world. While children have a good level of access to computers, digital cameras and other ICT resources, their opportunities to learn through these experiences are not as plentiful as in other areas because resources are not as plentiful.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided are second to none and firmly based on the staff's excellent knowledge of children and their families. Parents are fully involved at every stage of their children's time at the Nursery. They say that they appreciate the way in which the staff take account of their contributions, both when children start and through the frequent and easy channels of communication. The safety and welfare of children are at the forefront of the staff's thinking. Procedures for safeguarding children are very secure. Full and very effective use is made of the wide range of extended services provided by the Children's Centre to gain advice and support for children and their families. Many parents become partners in active research into their children's development and are fulsome in their praise of the benefits to children's well-being and learning. Excellent support for children with learning difficulties ensures that they make rapid progress towards their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Exceptional leadership and management have created a team with a common purpose and high aspirations. Parents feel that they are a vital part of the picture because of the strong partnership the staff have forged with them. Senior leaders and managers have created a climate in which the staff relish opportunities to bring about change for the better because they see benefits for the children. The Nursery very effectively uses the considerable expertise from the Research Base that is part of the Children's Centre to support its work in professional development for staff. Excellent self-evaluation is grounded in the close review of practice to pinpoint where improvements are needed. Action is carried out swiftly and effectively and the track record of achieving targets set is excellent. The newly formed governing body provides good support for the Nursery's work. Governors know the school's priorities and are extending their ability to ask pertinent questions to help the Nursery reflect on its provision.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	NA

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	1
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

5 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Pen Green Centre for Children and their Families, Corby NN17 1BJ

Thank you for being so kind and welcoming to me when I came to see you. I am writing to tell you what I found out about your Nursery. I can see why you enjoy coming every day and why your parents think that your Nursery is such a brilliant place for you! It is giving you an excellent start to your education. This is what I found that makes Pen Green such a special place.

- You really enjoy being with your friends and the grown-ups who work with you.
- Your behaviour is excellent. Well done to all of you for being so polite and thoughtful!
- You know how to be healthy, fit and safe and also how to have fun.
- You are doing very well and learning all the things you need to know for when you start your next school. This is because the teaching is excellent.
- All of the grown-ups are very kind and take good care of you. They know you all very well and give you the right sort of help just when you need it.
- You have such exciting things to do every day and I could see how much you enjoy exploring outdoors and learning new things.
- Everyone works hard to get the best for you and the people in charge make sure that the Nursery is a lovely, happy place for you.

I have asked the grown-ups to do one thing to make things even better. This is to make sure that you have even more chances to use things like computers. You will enjoy this, I am sure, because you are so good at it. Keep on making the most of your time at Nursery and enjoying working and playing together.

I wish you all the very best in the future.

Mrs Barbara Crane Lead Inspector