

Newtown Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119090
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313183
Inspection date	9 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kay Oakley
Headteacher	Miss Sandra Williams
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2005
School address	Newtown Street Colne Lancashire BB8 0JF
Telephone number	01282 864411
Fax number	01282 864433

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the children's development across all areas of learning and the quality of teaching; the use of the environment and standards of care and guidance
- the benefits for children of links with the Early Learning Centre
- the quality of leadership and management.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, children's profiles and assessment records, school documents, parents' replies to the questionnaires, and discussions with staff, governors and children. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This Nursery is situated close to the town centre and serves a very wide area, including some outlying villages. It offers part-time places for children over the age of three. The vast majority of children are of White British heritage. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is relatively low. An adjoining Early Years Centre offers all day care for children aged 0–4 years and shares management and staff with the Nursery. Several children attend both settings, taking advantage of the all day 'wrap around care'.

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 Nursery with some outstanding features. It provides good value for money. Parents have very positive views. One described it as 'a happy, caring and interesting environment in which children can develop their skills and have fun doing so.' Many other parent questionnaires included praise for the 'friendly, helpful and approachable staff'. Children and their families derive excellent benefits from services offered by the Early Years Centre and other links. For example, pre-nursery sessions help to boost development for young children and the combined full day provision helps to prepare children for the move into full time education. In addition, links with primary schools, medical and social services ensure that children have the support they need.

Children's development, on entry to the Nursery, is mostly typical for the age group but there are wide variations. Some have advanced further than expected while others have difficulties, especially with speech and language. All make good progress and, by the time they transfer into their Reception classes, the development of most children is above the expectations for their age. They are confident in counting and recognising numbers and are becoming more secure when it comes to working on simple calculations and problems. Children make good progress in communicating and expressing ideas but their knowledge of letter sounds to support early reading and writing is not as well developed. Children make good use of computers and are confident in accessing their own choice of learning games. During the inspection they demonstrated their good knowledge of the world, for example, by appropriately using a wide range of gadgets in the 'home area' and naming many sea creatures. Physical and creative development progresses at a good pace because children have imaginative role-play areas and an exciting selection of activities to encourage exercise and dexterity. The imaginative 'park area' is a great favourite where children enjoy physical challenges and exploring the wild life area. Children who have additional needs have very good support and achieve very well from their starting points. Boys and girls achieve equally well because the staff take great care to check their progress and to provide topics and activities that appeal to both.

Personal, social and emotional development, including children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, is outstanding and supported through an excellent programme of personal education. Children's attitudes to learning are excellent and most maintain good concentration. Attendance is good. Children thoroughly enjoy coming to Nursery and behave extremely well. They share resources willingly and minor disagreements are sorted out quickly, often needing only a minimum of intervention by adults. Children begin to develop a sense of community awareness through engaging in charity fundraising and welcoming younger children and their parents for social days.

Children learn well because the quality of teaching and the curriculum is good. Strong teamwork between teachers and very well trained teaching assistants ensures a good consistency of approach. As a result, children are well versed in routines and know exactly what is expected of them. The curriculum provides a good balance across areas of learning and includes varied opportunities for children to investigate and solve problems. Planning ensures that children have a good mixture of taught sessions, where they learn new skills and knowledge, together with independent work. For example, some children worked on a large construction with the teacher, learning how it fitted together. This later became a problem-solving activity as they worked on fixing parts that had come adrift. The time allocated to specifically teaching sounds

and letters is insufficient. The teaching of sounds and letters in the sessions that were seen was less stimulating and imaginative than in other areas of learning.

Staff adapt their planning according to children's interests. The recent 'underwater topic' was extended because children enjoyed it so much. This approach ensures that children's views are taken into account and keeps them motivated. There is very good enhancement for learning through visitors and frequent visits to places of interest, such as the zoo or farm. The lunchtime French club is an exciting addition to the provision. With help, children acted out the story of the Hungry Caterpillar, with excellent pronunciation of the words for numbers and foods.

The induction process includes home visits and is very successful in helping children to settle quickly. When they begin Nursery children's learning is assessed and they are allocated to 'family' groups with a key adult who gets to know them very well. The system ensures that children's progress is monitored and work is planned carefully to take their learning forward. It also facilitates good, on-going links with home. Staff give excellent guidance for children by gently prompting and guiding them to try new things or go one step further. Parents receive very good information about the topics covered and how they can help at home; in turn they are able to support children's progress well. In addition, the popular courses for family literacy and numeracy provide parents with a valuable insight into early learning.

Children are securely cocooned within this very safe environment and checks on staffing meet requirements. The National Healthy Schools Award recognises the excellent work done in teaching children about healthy living. During the sunny inspection day, children were mindful to wear their hats and to seek shade. Children are constantly encouraged to be independent. This, together with a good foundation for learning, means that children are well prepared for their future education.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is constantly driving the nursery forwards and has some ambitious plans for the further integration of care and education. Systems are well established and this enables successful delegation of responsibility. For example, the senior manager and staff have been able to maintain provision at the usual, good level during the recent secondment of the headteacher. Records of children's progress enable managers to check on performance and to plan improvements. The process is effective and has led to an improvement in children's progress in mathematical understanding this year. However, the use of two different success criteria makes it very difficult to check how much value has been added to children's learning over time, especially for governors. Plans are in place to revise the records.

The one key issue from the previous inspection has been addressed and the integration of care and extended services provide additional benefits for early learning. With this positive record, the school has good capacity to maintain its strengths and improve further. Governors have been successful in attracting new members and in developing their role and expertise. They are now looking to play a more active part in checking children's development. Governance is good and all statutory requirements are met.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

As all of the children are under five, this section is covered by the 'Overall effectiveness of the school'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the emphasis on teaching about sounds and letters and children's learning in early reading and writing skills.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	2
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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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

10 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Newtown Nursery School, Lancashire, BB8 0JF

I had a lovely time in your Nursery. Thank you for showing me all the exciting things you do. I really like the way you all stay so busy, are very happy and get on with each other so well. There was a lot of fun and laughter as you played in the 'park area' and you exercised really hard.

I think your mathematical skills are coming along well and I was impressed with your counting and the number of shapes that you can recognise. You are also doing well at controlling pencils, making interesting pictures and models and finding out about your world. You enjoy books and stories and by the time you leave the nursery, you can hold an interesting conversation. I saw some of you working on letters and sounds but you aren't quite as confident in this aspect of your learning. Once you go to big school, you will need these skills for reading and writing so I have asked your school to help you split up sounds in words, match letters and sounds, and try writing some simple words.

Your parents sent me lots of replies to the questionnaire and I was very happy about that. They think it is a good Nursery and I agree with them. They are pleased that you have such a good time learning so many important things. What good workers you are! Well done! It is also good to know that some of you go home singing songs and talking constantly about your friends.

Thank you for those lovely smiles you gave me and for letting me join in with your games and activities. I really enjoyed the pizza and toast you made for my breakfast when I visited the home area. I hope that you continue to enjoy your learning journey as you move into your next schools. Keep up the hard work and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector