

Gloucester Nursery School and Childrens Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121785
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314099
Inspection date	28 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Linda Killman HMI

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	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Brenan
Headteacher	Julia Mann
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2004
School address	Camborne Close Delapre Northampton NN4 8PH
Telephone number	01604 762251
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The overall effectiveness of the school and the following issues were investigated: the effectiveness of the school's assessment systems; the curriculum, particularly provision for the most able learners; how far the school has improved since its last inspection and the leadership and management's capacity to make further improvements.

Evidence was gathered from assessment data; the school's records and documents; parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire; observation of the children learning; and discussions with staff, parents, 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

Gloucester Nursery draws from a large area in southern Northamptonshire. It is part of a newly opened Children's Centre offering a range of integrated services for young children and their families that will be inspected separately. The majority of children are White British. They come from mixed backgrounds, with varying degrees of social and economic deprivation or advantage. Children's attainment on entry is close to the level expected for their age. At the end of their Nursery Year, the children transfer to many different schools.

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 some outstanding features, providing young children with a wonderful start to their education. Children begin the nursery year with skills and understanding that are broadly in line with expectations. Most make good progress to reach, and in some cases exceed, the attainment expected for their age. One parent's comment captures the views of the vast majority, describing Gloucester Nursery as 'a very special place that educates a child by allowing them to experience the magic of childhood'. There is no room for complacency at the school. The headteacher, ably supported by another teacher and governors, continuously strives to refine and develop teaching and learning, which are good in all respects. The school's leaders and managers seize opportunities to consult parents and children and take their views on board. For example, plans for a major project to revamp the nursery garden are in place and include ideas contributed by staff, governors, parents and children. Finances are managed effectively, ensuring that resources are up to date and that the building is clean, checked for safety and well maintained. Procedures for child protection are fully in place and understood by staff. However, safeguarding arrangements are not reviewed regularly enough.

So, what are the key factors that enable the children to get off to such a flying start? The children's personal development is outstanding because the school's ethos focuses on their social and emotional well-being as well as their educational development. The staff know the children well and develop very trusting relationships with their parents. 'Everyone makes you feel very welcome; part of a big family where everyone's needs are catered for'. This enables sensitive management of each child's 'handover' from parent to key worker at the beginning of the session, building the children's confidence so that they get to work quickly and enthusiastically making the transfer from home to school seamless. It also contributes to the children's excellent attendance. Parents say that their children love nursery and some ask to attend during the holidays because they have such a good experience with much to look forward to. Children from different cultural backgrounds play harmoniously. The children use their initiative, make choices, share and take turns. They understand how to use tools and play safely, know right from wrong and take responsibility. They make their own snacks and are acutely aware that the food on offer is good for them. They make good or better progress in all six areas of learning so that they transfer to their local schools well prepared for statutory full-time education. Transition arrangements are excellent as children reach this milestone.

The curriculum is good and engages most children, both indoors and outside, in activities that really capture their imagination and enable them to work with sustained interest. The children have many opportunities to gain skills as emerging readers and writers. They learn to count and some show good skills in calculation as they work out number problems through play. The children develop as creative individuals because they have the space to experiment, use their imagination and respond to familiar and unfamiliar experiences in their own unique style. Regular walks and visits to local places of interest extend their knowledge and understanding of the world. Back in the nursery, they act out their experiences through role-play. For example, a visit to a local café resulted in the children having a very clear understanding of the roles of catering staff and customers. Later, in the classroom, the play café was a hive of industry, following the food sequence from the kitchen to the table. Nonetheless, some activities do not always provide sufficient range to tempt both girls and boys. Few girls, for example, choose to dig and build in the 'building site' and very few boys show any desire to play in the home corner.

The school's detailed and exceptionally well-recorded assessments are used effectively by staff to adapt daily planning, tailoring activities to ensure that the children learn all that they should. Parents have full access to these records and contribute to their child's profile by identifying their achievements beyond school. This adds even more to the accuracy of the school's awareness of each child's achievements. 'Home challenges' provide parents with good ideas for how they can extend their child's learning at home. The staff provide very good support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, adapting activities skilfully so that they can take a full part in all that is on offer and make particularly rapid progress. The quality of teaching is good overall. The adults know when to intervene and when to step back and let the children pursue their own ideas. Some questioning does not extend children's thinking well enough. There is enough challenge in most activities for children of all abilities but adult-led group activities do not engage children fully and as a result, some children lose interest.

The headteacher has a clear vision for how the school should move forward and communicates this effectively to everyone. Governors are effective in supporting the school as well as providing the right level of challenge. Monitoring and evaluation at all levels are rigorous and searching, leading to sustained improvement, and contribute significantly to the school's excellent capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

As the school only has children aged 3 to 4, there is no requirement to complete this section. The report covers, in full, the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that provision engages boys and girls and that stereotypes are suitably challenged
- ensure that adult-led group activities are productive and engaging for all children.

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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	1

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	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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?	2
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.

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	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	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

29 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Gloucester Nursery School, Northampton, NN4 8PH

I expect you saw me when I came to visit your lovely nursery recently. I really enjoyed watching you play and talking to you about what you were doing in the classroom and outside in the nursery garden. The nursery is good in many ways, and some things about it are really super. I would like to tell you what I liked best.

I thought that you are all very good children who play beautifully together, taking turns, sharing toys and making friends. You choose what you want to do and stick at it until the job is done. Your parents told me that you love coming to school because you always have such fun and there is so much to look forward to. Your key workers know you so well and help you to learn new things each day. Your families say that you go to one of the best nursery schools because you learn so much and you are looked after properly.

I have asked the adults to make your nursery even better by making sure that that boys and girls enjoy playing together in all the activities indoors and out. I have also asked them to make group time more interesting and enjoyable for you.

I know that you will be ready when you have to move to your next school. I hope that as you grow up, you will always enjoy school as much as you do now. Your plans for the nursery garden are very exciting and when it is finished you will be able to have lots of new adventures. I hope you like it!

Good wishes

Linda Killman Her Majesty's Inspector



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Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector