

Lark Hill Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106016
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	324315
Inspection date	31 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bryan Lees
Headteacher	Miss Joanne O'Raw
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2006
School address	Northgate Road Edgeley Stockport Cheshire SK3 9PH
Telephone number	0161 4800867
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Age group	3–5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Lark Hill Nursery serves an area where some families experience social and economic disadvantage. It provides Early Years Foundation Stage education for children aged three to four years. Children join the school in the term after their third birthday, with admissions at the start of each term. A small number of children are identified as having a learning difficulty and/or disability. While most of the children who attend are White British, a small proportion is from other heritages, with home languages other than English. Patterns of provision are tailored to match the needs of individual families, with a mix of part-time and full-time places. The nursery shares a site with a primary school and they co-host a new Children's Centre which opened in October 2008. Because of building work taking place during the summer and autumn terms of 2008, the nursery relocated temporarily to rooms in the primary school and returned to its own, upgraded, accommodation in October.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Lark Hill Nursery provides a good standard of education for its children. It makes an outstanding contribution to the children's personal development and well-being. Provision for their welfare is also outstanding. An inclusive ethos means that children with a range of learning needs and from differing home backgrounds are enabled to grow, play and learn together happily. The good quality of their nursery experience prepares children well for the next stage in their education.

Achievement is good. Children make good progress, often from low starting points. Regardless of their ability they enjoy opportunities to experience success. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are learning to speak English also make good progress in relation to their starting points. Children move on to Reception with skills that match the expectations for their age group and with very positive attitudes to learning.

Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding because they are nurtured extremely well. Children are happy and eager to be at nursery and this is reflected in their excellent behaviour and attendance. In the secure environment of the nursery, children become independent and confident learners. They talk about their activities with growing assurance and they show an increasing ability to sustain and develop their thinking and concentration through active play. They have an extremely good understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles and put this into practice at snack times when they enjoy helping to serve each other with fruit and drinks. Children's welfare is given high priority. Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are in place and supervision is extremely good at all times. The nursery has good links with a range of outside agencies that contribute to the children's welfare and progress.

The quality of children's learning and development is good. The nursery provides good teaching in an attractive and stimulating learning environment. Staff know their children well. They make careful and detailed observations which enable them to plan activities which the children enjoy. They have a good knowledge of the new Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and have adapted their plans very well to meet the changes. Staff take careful note of the children's interests and responses and use information collected from their observations, and from discussions with the children, to help to determine the direction of the activities. As a result, children can relate readily to what they are being taught. A specialist teaching programme is used effectively to support those children who need extra help to develop their speaking and listening skills. Well-designed programmes underpin effective individual support for children who have additional learning needs. Children benefit greatly from adventurous activities in the well planned outdoor area. The quality and range of resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have been improved in the refurbished accommodation and ICT is starting to be used effectively to support children's learning. More remains to be done to make sure ICT is part of everyday practice.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher used the experience of temporary relocation as an opportunity to reflect with her staff on current practice and provision in the nursery and to conduct a searching review of its quality. This had a positive effect on the way provision was reorganised when the nursery moved back into its refurbished accommodation; encapsulated in a typical parental comment that, 'The nursery was good before, it is even better now.' The nursery is still in the process of developing its practice so as to accelerate children's learning. It is well on the way, but this has yet to be seen in sustained higher achievement with

a greater proportion of children working above age-related expectations. The smooth day-to-day running of the nursery has been maintained and high standards of provision sustained during the period of turbulence. All staff are fully involved and support each other, discussing concerns, celebrating achievements and planning for improvement. They make regular checks on children's progress and the school uses these well to help it plan actions to support their learning. Effective monitoring systems give the school a clear understanding of how well it is doing. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive. A strong team ethos, with staff and governors united in their clear vision and resolve to take the school forward successfully, and the way children clearly flourish in their learning and development mean the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure ICT is used to the full to add further enrichment to activities provided for the children across all the areas of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter Nursery with skills that are below expectations for their age-group, with many showing poor communication skills. They quickly gain very positive attitudes and make good progress in all the areas of early learning. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are at an early stage of learning English all progress at the same good rate as their peers. Children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world around them through investigative play indoors and outside. Their early literacy and numeracy skills develop well because they have opportunities to practise them frequently during their play activities. All of this supports their outstanding personal development and helps them to gain the confidence they need to begin independent learning. Good attention is given to extending and challenging more able children, so that they, too, progress and achieve well, with a small but increasing number working a little above age-expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children thoroughly enjoy coming to nursery and they take part in all the activities with great enthusiasm. Their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is clearly apparent. Outstanding behaviour is the norm because children absorb the school's culture of respect and cooperation. Children learn to share, take turns and form happy friendships. They play together harmoniously and show care and kindness towards each other. The children show a growing awareness of which foods are really good for them; they enjoy the healthy snacks provided for them and the sociable nature of snack time and lunchtime. They can talk about their learning activities with growing confidence and clarity of expression. Children develop a good awareness of personal safety and they comply with the simple rules that relate to this. They develop self-help skills, for example knowing they must wash their hands before eating, putting on their own wellingtons and wrapping up warmly to play out of doors. They are prepared well for the next stage in their learning and have a good basis in early literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start and develop positive attitudes to learning. This is because staff know each child well and address their individual learning needs effectively. The quality of teaching is good, with some outstanding practice. Activities are tailored to match the range of the children's needs, enabling all to enjoy success. Assessment is thorough and achievements are recorded and celebrated. Children enjoy looking at and talking about the photographs and examples of their work in their records of achievement. They work well with adults and also independently. They collaborate well with each other, for example in interesting activities such as searching for minibeasts in the forest area. Good relations between home and school support parents in helping their children to succeed as learners, with initiatives such as the 'story sacks' providing books, toys and ideas for learning at home. Systematic and effective provision helps children to learn early literacy and numeracy skills. A well-developed language programme provides very effective support for children who have speech and language difficulties and for those who are learning to speak English. The children are beginning to develop their skills and confidence in using ICT equipment in their activities, although further work is needed to apply the use of ICT across all the areas of learning. The nursery provides children with exciting investigative outdoor activities which develop their knowledge and understanding of the world around them and which promote their health and physical development.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 1

Children are extremely well cared for in the nursery. They thrive in a safe and secure environment which enables them to feel comfortable and ready to learn. The allocation of key workers makes certain that each child has their own special adult to oversee their care and development. This helps to ensure that staff have a clear and detailed overview of each child's progress and welfare, which they share with parents. The nursery's outstanding partnership with parents reassures the children and so they quickly develop trusting relationships with staff and with each other. Child protection and safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements. Behaviour is managed extremely well. Arrangements to ensure children's physical safety and well-being are robust. Staff make good use of the information they gather from their observations relating to children's achievements to identify quickly any child in need of additional support. Good links with external agencies successfully promote children's health, learning and well-being.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There is a strong sense of teamwork throughout the nursery. The effective headteacher has a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Staff and governors share her sense of purpose. Everyone places a very high priority on ensuring equality of opportunity for all children. This is seen, particularly, in the good support given to ensure that all children participate fully in every available activity. Good procedures for day-to-day management ensure that things run smoothly. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. This is seen in its good partnerships with the Children's Centre, the primary

school and services which support health and social care. It is also seen in the nursery's frequent involvement in fundraising for local and national charitable causes, which helps children to become aware of the needs of others. Good systems are in place to monitor the quality of the nursery's provision and the school's self-evaluation is very accurate. Governors are supportive and are able to act as critical friends to the school. A well-crafted school development plan supports the nursery's ongoing drive to raise standards and achievement.

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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 is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do children in the EYFS 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/or disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children?	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
The extent to which 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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?	1

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we visited your nursery. We really enjoyed meeting you all.

I think you have a lovely nursery and I know that you think so too. You go to a good nursery. These are some of the things I found out during my visit:

- you are very happy, friendly children and you are very good at remembering to be kind to each other and to play together well
- the grown-ups look after you extremely well and they help you to learn to do things for yourselves
- your teachers find interesting things for you to do and this is helping you to learn lots of important skills. I was especially pleased to see how much you enjoy stories and songs and how you have so much fun out of doors
- your teachers talk very often with your mums and dads and that helps them to help you at home with your learning.

I've asked your headteacher and the staff to carry on finding more opportunities for you to use computers, cameras and other ICT equipment, to make your activities even more interesting and fun.

Thank you once more for helping me to find out about your nursery.