

Kendal Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112091
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325526
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Saunders

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 (total)	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Vivien Kincey
Headteacher	Mrs Veronica Broyd
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Brantfield Queens Road Kendal Cumbria LA9 4PH
Telephone number	01539 773626
Fax number	01539 773626

Age group	3–4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average sized nursery school providing education for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It is located in a large, Victorian house with extensive gardens, where it has been for sixty years. It serves a community from a wide area and children transfer to about ten primary schools. The school is recognised as an extended school, providing support for families and offering year-round full day care provided by Brantfield Quality Care which is managed by the school. The school is developing a role as part of the Children's Centre for the town. The school now offers additional services for toddler groups, child minders and parents in a new, purpose-built extension on the house. The school achieved Healthy Schools status in 2007.

The vast majority of children are of White British heritage, but a few are from minority ethnic backgrounds and are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties/and or disabilities is broadly typical for a school of this size. A new headteacher was appointed in 2007.

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, where the high quality dedication and care of staff leads to outstanding personal development and well-being of the children. Parents understandably hold the school and staff in the highest esteem, and feel that the 'Brantfield experience' is 'first class'. They are unanimous in their praise. In the words of one parent, 'I feel that this year at Brantfield will give my child a love of learning which, hopefully, will stay with her the rest of her life.'

There is a strong sense of fun and excitement as children come through the door, with great anticipation of what they will do today. An outstanding feature is the outdoor provision, which makes innovative use of the extensive garden that has many trees, exciting dens to hide in, and paths to explore. All this adventurous opportunity is carefully managed alongside very good training for children to assess what is risky, and how to make careful choices. Both indoors and outdoors, they develop confidence in making decisions for themselves. These are respected by adults, who provide the necessary support when it is needed. Children behave well and all including those from different backgrounds get along agreeably, so that the school community is harmonious.

Many of the children join the school with attainment below levels typical for their age. However, the broad range of learning opportunities, effective promotion of learning and considerate nurture from the staff mean that they make good progress. Most are working within the early learning goals set for them by the time they leave. Some make even better progress. Those who find learning difficult are quickly identified and well supported so that the majority of them make excellent progress, considering their starting points. A contributory factor to this progress is the excellent links with a wide range of other partners to provide the best opportunities and support for the children.

Skilful leadership and clear vision by the headteacher, along with the dedication of the staff, has created a homely atmosphere where learning is highly infectious. Everyone in the school is extremely safety conscious but not at the expense of promoting confidence and a sense of adventure among children. The care with which children move around the building and use the stairs, and the equipment in the garden, demonstrates a sense of independence. They eat healthy snacks in school, know a great deal about keeping safe and join in energetically in the learning activities. This keenness is reflected in children's good levels of attendance and the knowledge they are gaining about the world in which they live.

The school has accurately evaluated its successes and where there are still some developments required. For example, the new childcare provision, while firmly established and providing a safe, enjoyable environment, does not yet provide the same high quality of learning as the nursery does. Some policies also need to be reviewed and formally adopted and the staff's planning to promote early reading and writing skills is not sharp enough. However, the school is rigorous in thoughtfully considering what needs to be done in every aspect so that there is good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the planning for developing early reading and writing skills to ensure there is an appropriate progression of skills for all children.
- Ensure that the quality of provision for childcare matches that in the rest of the school, particularly the opportunities to learn and develop.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children join the school with a wide range of skills and knowledge, many below what is typical for their age, particularly in problem solving, reasoning and number. Their good progress is a result of the staff's sound knowledge of how young children learn, and the dedicated way in which their interests are further stimulated by the adults around them. Most are working at the level expected for their age by the time they leave. There has been a focus on developing language for number and as a result, children are confident in this aspect of mathematical development. However, the lack of a structured approach to teaching early reading and writing skills means children are not making as much progress as they should in communication and language learning. The stimulating experiences planned for social, creative and physical development lead to very good progress. Children who are not finding learning easy and may have additional needs or may be learning English as an additional language are quickly identified and support put in place so that most of them make excellent progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children respond excitedly to the range of activities offered to them; they are inquisitive and keen to learn. They thoroughly enjoy thinking through problems, exploring, and participating in outdoor activities. For example, they took delight in organising their own extension building, deciding on when things needed to be done, what supplies were needed, and who was doing what. Plenty of activities like this which feed the children's interest mean that their personal, social and emotional development and their physical and creative skills progress very well. Their curiosity and eagerness to learn about the world in which they live is impressive. They know that changes can occur in ingredients and materials, for example, from their experiences of making apple cake and raisin muffins.

They take pride in the work they do, particularly the 'special books', recording their learning journeys, which are cherished by children and parents. These books include the things they are excited about, as well as the learning stories recorded with them, by the key adult responsible for them, as well as contributions from parents. All this helps them to know that they are valued, and to promote their positive attitudes to learning.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Interesting and varied activities are used well by teachers to engage children. Adults working with them have a good knowledge of EYFS learning and development requirements and ensure activities develop all areas of learning. Good questioning prompts children to think more deeply. The outdoor provision includes all the areas of learning and is exemplary, because it has been creatively developed with the needs and enjoyment of the children in mind. The curriculum has a good impact on children's learning and development and is enriched and extended very well. Plans for teaching are flexible depending on children's interests. This ensures a varied and practical day but the lack of structure to teaching literacy skills restricts progress. Children have regular opportunities to work with visiting artists and visits to the local library and art gallery, among others, are very beneficial. Children have a good

range of opportunities to use technology themselves, including computers, programmable toys and digital cameras. Most children are suitably challenged by the activities, although planning for learning and the activities provided are not yet as strong in the childcare setting. Children enjoy discussing their work with their key carer, or with their parents, and are helped to reflect on what they have learned. Good communication with parents and carers means that they are helped to be an effective part of the learning process.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 2

Welfare is at the core of what the school does and staff are highly dedicated to caring for the children. They go out of their way to ensure children are contented and well supported. There are effective strategies in place to promote children's wellbeing, such as the learning stories, which capture and nurture children's personal discoveries of learning. This is beginning to be reflected in the child care provision as well. Statutory requirements to safeguard children are in place with appropriate policies to ensure children's welfare is catered for. Some of these are being developed further to reflect the slightly different needs in the child care setting. Risk assessments are carefully carried out and the school holds a thoughtful balance of helping children to make appropriate decisions to stay safe, while being able to gauge risk and choose actions as a result. Parents have regular updates about their child's learning and can attend helpful workshops, to understand more about how children learn in school. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well included in learning and the life of the school. Where it is needed, the school uses the excellent relationships with other partners to provide additional support. Parents are most complimentary about this aspect of provision.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's strong and visionary leadership has meant that the school provides an exciting and fun place that children love coming to, highly regarded by parents. She has provided careful analysis of the monitoring data collected and made good decisions about how to improve provision as a result. She knows the children, the staff and the school very well and is leading the way towards ensuring that the outcomes for children are even better. She is aware of areas that need to be developed, and is beginning to help other staff to take the lead in this, providing appropriate support where it is needed. Her focus is clearly on the enjoyment of the children and developing good attitudes towards learning. This has built up a strong sense of common purpose. Resources are used well and the school makes the most of the buildings and grounds. Partnerships with other agencies are extremely strong and help to ensure that children have a smooth transition to the next stage of their learning. The school contributes greatly to the development of community cohesion in helping the children to get on well together and care for the nursery. This development is extended through their effective links with the children's centre, toddler groups, parenting courses and support for childminders. Governors provide strong support alongside suitable challenge. There is a well considered approach to ensuring continuity among governors and developing their own skills further. They have managed the financial challenges of setting up the child care provision very well, and ensure that the school provides good value for money.

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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?	1
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	2
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	1

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	2
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?	2

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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

5 December 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Kendal Nursery School, Cumbria, LA9 4PH

Thank you so much for letting me join in with some of the fun things you were doing when I came to visit your school. It was kind of you to let me taste the lovely apple cake and raisin muffins you made. It was particularly exciting to see how much you enjoyed the snow in the garden. You played very carefully and I was impressed at all the different things you like doing outside, including 'Going on a bear hunt'!

Your school is a good school, and you are very good at learning how to look after yourselves and each other. Your teachers make sure there are lots of interesting things to do, and you join in very well. You like telling the adults about what you have learnt, and your 'special books' are super to look at. The adults care for you well and make sure you are safe at all times. You help with this by being careful, particularly going up and down all those stairs!

Those of you who go to Brantfield Quality Care are also well looked after, although you don't yet get as many chances to learn and develop as those in the nursery. The school is going to make sure that you have just as good chances there to learn new things. Your teachers are also planning to make sure that the things you do to help you learn to read and write get harder as you get more confident.

Most of all, you should continue to enjoy what you are learning, and help your teachers by listening carefully and thinking about what you have learnt.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Saunders

Lead inspector