

Castle Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112482
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325613
Inspection date	17 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Anna Coyle

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Thomas
Headteacher	Mrs Kathy Mayer
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2006
School address	Copeland Street Derby Derbyshire DE1 2PU
Telephone number	01332 347388
Fax number	01332 347388

Age group	3–5
Inspection date	17 June 2009
Inspection number	325613

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. In addition, the following issues were investigated.

- how well children learn in communication, language and literacy and in problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy
- how well the school has developed its use of assessment
- the effectiveness of the school's monitoring of teaching and learning.

Evidence was gathered from the school's analysis of children's progress, a scrutiny of their work and observations of activities. Discussions were held with staff, governors and children. In addition, the responses of 17 parents' questionnaires were analysed and their comments taken into account.

Description of the school

Castle Nursery School is a very small school that serves the city of Derby. It is federated with Cherry Tree Hill Infant school and both are managed by the headteacher. This school accepts children on a part-time or full-time basis. Children have similar skills to those expected for their age when they first start. Almost all are of White British heritage and there is a small number who learn English as an additional language. The main languages spoken at home, apart from English, are Punjabi, Urdu, Polish and Arabic. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than in other schools: most of them find learning hard or have autistic or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school has gained the Health Promoting School Status. It runs a breakfast session and an after-school session at the beginning and end of the day, and a toddler group on Friday mornings, which are all managed by the governing body. The school premises are also used by the National Health Service for care provision during the holidays.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school has maintained its good provision since the last inspection and now has some outstanding features to add to its credit. It is a very happy, harmonious and safe place in which children learn eagerly and become caring little citizens. Parents have great confidence in the school and are unanimous in their positive comments which are summarised by those who wrote about the school's 'fantastic staff', 'calm, caring and supportive environment' and 'welcoming atmosphere'.

Children love coming to school and take great enjoyment in learning. From starting points that are similar to those expected for their age, they attend regularly and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage to attain the expected steps for their age in communication, language and literacy and in problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy. The secure start children make in linking sounds to letters and number skills provides a firm foundation for their education. Children become totally absorbed in their play and they chatter to each other as they find out about the world around them, helping one another as they go along. They do well in creative and physical development: children enjoy using bright colours when painting butterflies and they love to make models using old cereal boxes, glue and sticky tape. The wide range of outdoor play opportunities for physical activities helps children to become fit and healthy. The very clean and well maintained outdoor area contains a good array of exciting resources that are used well for developing coordination and muscle control, climbing and imaginative play.

All children do particularly well in personal, social and emotional development. This is an outstanding feature of the school in which children excel because there is a very strong emphasis on helping them to learn personal skills. For example, children settle quickly when they arrive and they share toys and equipment happily. They take turns willingly and play together cheerfully. They develop high self esteem and confidence and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children enjoy growing plants in the safe outdoor learning area. This aids their excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, which is further recognised by the school's award for being a healthy place. Lunchtime is a good social occasion when children eat their midday meal all together: they really enjoy the taste of roast chicken and vegetables and have good skills when using knives and forks. The school does all it can to forge links with the local community but its location on a small industrial site limits the possibilities for community cohesion. Nevertheless, children actively contribute well to the school community through charity events and fund-raising for children in need.

Children thrive in their learning as a direct result of consistently good teaching and creative use of the indoor and outside spaces for all areas of learning. Adults ensure that all children equally have excellent opportunities to be independent and choose for themselves. They are given scope to learn from their mistakes when, for example, they manoeuvre around objects and other little people, knowing that they have to be careful to avoid coming off their bikes or bumping into anyone. All staff know the children and their families very well. They are good at tailoring activities that best appeal to the children by directing them towards tasks such as counting games and threading beads to help them learn about numbers. Teamwork is excellent and teachers and teaching assistants work together seamlessly to encourage children to work in small groups or individually. All children are valued equally as unique individuals. The potentially challenging behaviour of a small number of children is handled very well in a kindly, positive manner so that behaviour is excellent overall. The use of clear routines, extra adult

guidance and consistent praise for doing the right thing helps children to understand how to behave.

Learning and development are good. Resources are well organised for the outdoor areas and also for learning indoors. The environment contains lots of lovely displays and celebrations of children's work, which are highly colourful and vibrant. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and sometimes outstanding. Learning is underpinned by excellent relationships and behaviour management by adults, who make sure that there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere at all times. They are adept at ensuring that the tasks presented are exciting and are matched well to the children's different learning needs. In addition, learning is enlivened by many visitors to the school, such as the local police and fire officers, and trips to places such as Twycross Zoo. Children also benefit from the well organised breakfast and after-care provision. Adults act as keyworkers for the children and watch over them closely. Consequently, children of all abilities make good progress. Teaching assistants and nursery nurses make a strong contribution to the school's provision. They are highly skilled, well trained and they support individuals and small groups of children very effectively. Those who learn English as an additional language receive careful guidance and support to help them participate in all activities within a highly inclusive and positive environment.

Children's welfare is assured and the required standards are met for keeping them safe. Staff care for the children exceptionally well. They keep thorough assessments of how well children are progressing. These excellent records have been simplified and streamlined carefully, which is a significant improvement since the last inspection. In addition, children have 'personal passports' which contain detailed information about their progress, as well as lots of wonderful photographs of them at work and play. These show that all groups of children achieve well, whatever their academic capability or learning needs. The progress of all children is tracked vigilantly so that any who might be struggling are quickly identified and their needs met. The provision for children who find learning hard is outstanding. Parents are very impressed with this aspect of the school's provision and the inspectors agree with them. For example, children who have autistic needs or speech and language difficulties make good progress because adults ensure that the provision is carefully tailored to meet their needs and there is excellent use of external agencies to support them. The school's excellent transfer arrangements help children to move on to their next school with ease.

The headteacher's good leadership has been maintained since the last inspection. She and the assistant headteacher are pivotal to the overall effectiveness of the school. They work together harmoniously to provide a warm, welcoming and lively environment for the children and their parents. All members of staff make a strong contribution to the school and provide outstanding teamwork, with the views of all adults being valued equally. This has led to high staff morale and a shared commitment to the ongoing improvement of the school. There are clear systems for the performance management of staff. However, information about the quality of teaching is not collated into one formal record to enable senior leaders to keep a careful check on its development. Governance is good. The governors have improved their roles well since the last inspection and now play an important part by providing strategic direction and regular monitoring of the work of the school. Leaders and governors are involved well in the administrative procedures and policy-making processes but these are not sharp enough to enable them to evaluate the school's provision accurately. As a result, it is difficult for them to quickly spot potentially weaker areas, and the school's self-evaluation, although fairly accurate, is a little over-generous. Even so, the school's good use of resources, its dedicated

staff and strong continuing focus on providing a vibrant learning environment for the children demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Clarify the systems for checking on the quality of teaching by drawing together all the information into one formal record.
- Sharpen up the administrative procedures and processes to provide a more rigorous approach to overseeing the school's provision.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	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	2
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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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**

18 June 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Castle Nursery School, Derby, DE1 2PU

Hello everyone! We enjoyed meeting with you and seeing all the exciting things you do at Nursery school. This letter is to tell you what we found when we came to see you. We think you are very lucky to attend such a good school. Here are some of the things that we found.

- We understand why you all love coming to school so much because all the adults look after you and care for you exceptionally well.
- They make sure that you are happy and safe.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you make good progress in your learning.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and we are pleased to see that your school has an award for being a healthy place.
- All the adults make sure that there is a good range of things for you to do.
- Your headteacher and the assistant headteacher work together really well so that the school runs smoothly and all the adults work closely together as an excellent team.

We have asked your headteacher and the governors to do two things to make the school even better.

- Make a list of all the good things about the teaching and the things to improve.
- Keep all the school's paperwork up-to-date and check it regularly.

We hope that you will all keep enjoying your time at school.

Best wishes

Dr Anna Coyle

Lead inspector