

# George Dent Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113983
<b>Local Authority</b>	Darlington
<b>Inspection number</b>	325918
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Armstrong

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	150
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Cllr Stephen Harker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Carol Dawson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 May 2006
<b>School address</b>	Elms Road Darlington County Durham DL3 7PY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01325 380802
<b>Fax number</b>	0

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<b>Age group</b>	3–4
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The Nursery serves a locality close to the centre of Darlington where socio-economic characteristics are average. An increasing number of children travel from other areas of the town to attend. It is a very popular school offering Early Years Foundation Stage education. Almost all the children are from a White British heritage, although a small number are from minority ethnic groups. A few children are at an early stage of learning English. A very low proportion of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is a delightful school which provides outstanding education for children. The headteacher gives very clear educational direction to the school's work and in turn all staff promote the philosophy that every child is unique. Excellent provision is a blend of outstanding teaching, a very rich curriculum and exceptional pastoral care. Children achieve highly and develop exceptionally well. This very inclusive school makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. This can be seen in the way the school forges very effective partnerships, especially with parents, to support children's development and well-being. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and speak in glowing terms about the 'warm and welcoming atmosphere' where dedicated staff help children develop 'their own interests and individualism'.

Most children begin Nursery with skills and abilities that are typical for their age, though some are more advanced. They settle quickly to routines and soon become confident and independent learners. Children of all abilities make rapid progress. Consequently, most are working well above the level expected for their age by the time they leave. Children with additional needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make excellent progress because of the carefully managed, sensitive support they receive. When taking all their starting points into account children achieve outstandingly well.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They look at natural things with awe and wonder. They soon learn to share and compromise in their interactions with one another. Their love of school is seen in their good attendance rates and exemplary behaviour. In the words of one parent, 'My child would go to school every day if allowed – even weekends and holidays!' Children benefit from the contribution of visitors and visits to widen their knowledge of the locality and how other people live. The quality of children's welfare is outstanding. Safeguarding arrangements and those for child protection are robust and supervision is at a high level at all times. As a result, children feel safe and secure and confidently take responsibility for their own learning. Staff ensure all children achieve exceptionally well and are successfully prepared for their next school.

Leadership, management and governance are highly effective in promoting children's development and achievement. The innovative use of funding, for example, has secured the work of an Early Years Practitioner in leading the 'Childminders' Network' initiative. Senior leaders monitor the quality of provision methodically and identify areas where improvements are needed. As a result, children demonstrate increasing independence in selecting and carrying out activities. However, senior leaders' view of the school is somewhat modest because they do not yet make full use of information about children's progress when evaluating the work of the school. The school's record of excellent achievement since the previous inspection, and its determination to sustain its success, indicate an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the use of information about pupils' progress to increase the accuracy of school self-evaluation.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

From the outset a very close partnership with parents enables staff to ensure children get off to a really good start. At the time of the previous inspection children made excellent progress and this has continued each year since then; they continue to reach levels that are well above those expected for their age by the time they leave. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those whose first language is not English, make exceptionally good progress. This is because of the skilful support they receive from dedicated staff within the school. The school engages with a wide range of external agencies which benefit children's personal and educational needs very effectively. Well planned learning opportunities in all the areas of learning ensure all children make outstanding progress from their starting points.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

All aspects of children's personal development and well-being are excellent. Children take part wholeheartedly in physical activities. They act responsibly and know how to keep themselves safe. Children know the importance of healthy eating and choose sensibly from the healthy snacks which are readily available to them. They work very well together and their excellent behaviour inside and outside is a clear reflection of the school's success in developing their social skills. Many are keen to contribute to school life, such as helping to plan the outdoor police station and taking obvious care when tidying away. The work they did to decorate the local church with three dimensional stars last year is an excellent example of cooperative work and contribution to the life of the community. Children's very well developed social, language and mathematical skills prepare them extremely well for the next stage in their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development**

#### **Grade: 1**

Excellent teaching, a very wide and rich range of opportunities and exceptionally effective liaison with parents contribute to children's outstanding learning and development. The very close partnership with parents enables the school to help children get off to a really good start. The Parents' Workshops, curriculum guidance booklets and the exemplary 'Story Sacks' initiative all help extend learning at home.

Children benefit tremendously from the many interesting and exciting activities which support all areas of learning. Visits to Hall Hill Farm and the contribution of visitors all enliven children's experience. Skilled story telling greatly interests children and they listen avidly and develop excellent communication skills. Well planned role play areas, including the 'George Dent Office', excite and inspire children. Alongside such activities children have many opportunities to develop independence, apply and extend their learning and show responsibility in activities they initiate.

Children play productively. Adults only intervene to encourage children to explore ideas and demonstrate their understanding. For example, children had great fun learning how to move rhythmically in response to music when preparing to participate in the 'Fantastic Dancing Show'. They developed their creative, investigative and social skills extensively during enthusiastic,

cooperative play. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly identified. Skilful support helps them learn and achieve outstandingly well.

### **Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare**

#### **Grade: 1**

Children's welfare is promoted very effectively, leading to children's outstanding personal development and well-being. Parents are confident that any concerns they have are listened to and dealt with quickly. Procedures for safeguarding children are fully in place and rigorously applied through all aspects of the provision. Relationships are excellent and children relate particularly well to their key worker who oversees their progress and needs. Every effort has been made to ensure the inspiring outdoor areas are safe and secure so children are confident, for example, in practising their physical skills when balancing on the climbing equipment. Children respond very well to the high expectations of good behaviour. They develop a very good level of independence as they are encouraged to take care of their own personal needs and to make choices about their activities. The very effective work of the Early Years Inclusion Practitioner ensures children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and play an active part in school life.

### **Leadership and management**

#### **Grade: 1**

Leadership, management and governance are outstanding. The headteacher and her deputy work very closely together as a coherent and exceptionally effective team. Leaders are associated with a wide variety of local initiatives and organisations that develop strong links with the community and so promote community cohesion extremely well. Teaching and learning are monitored systematically and support is provided when required. As a result, highly effective plans for teaching are flexible depending on children's interests. Senior leaders do not, however, make full use of children's progress information to establish how well the school is doing. As a result, self-evaluation is mostly accurate though at times somewhat modest. Governors are diligent in ensuring the school is well led and run. Through visits and reports they have a very clear perception of the cost effectiveness of its work and ensure that it provides excellent 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

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	1
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	1

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do children in the EYFS achieve?</b>	1
The standards[1] reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children?</b>	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	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	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?</b>	1
<b>How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?</b>	1



## Leadership and management

<b>How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

7 February 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of George Dent Nursery School, Darlington, DL3 7PY

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I inspected your Nursery school. I really enjoyed visiting the Treetops and Garden rooms and seeing all the lovely things you do. You were very polite and helpful. I did enjoy talking to you. Your new roof garden is fabulous! I was really pleased to see how keen you were to come into school and how much you enjoy learning about money in 'The Candy Shop'.

Your school is a very friendly place. I am pleased that you are safe and happy because all of the adults in the school look after you very well. I really like the way you play and work well together both inside and outside. You take turns, share the toys and equipment and tidy up very quickly afterwards. You are learning new things every day. You have especially good opportunities to make things, like designing pirate ships and making pizza, and to learn to get on with each other. You are also doing very well in starting to write, listening to stories and finding out about numbers. You behave really well and I could see how much you enjoy choosing from all of the activities available.

The headteacher and other adults in your school work very hard to make learning enjoyable for you. Recently, they have been checking very closely on how well you are doing. I have asked them to make even better checks so you can keep on learning new things and having fun.

You will leave in the summer to join a new school. You have many wonderful opportunities at George Dent Nursery to learn about life and these should help you in the future. I hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Armstrong

Lead inspector