

Croyland Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121783
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	327566
Inspection date	5 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	118
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Denis
Headteacher	C Whelan
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2006
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Croyland Road Wellingborough NN8 2AX
Telephone number	01933 279681
Fax number	01933 233869

Age group	2–5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This large children's centre and nursery serves a socially and culturally diverse community in Wellingborough. It provides full- and part-time provision in a local authority funded nursery and a fee paying nursery for up to 50 weeks a year. The percentage of children from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly average in the current year, with just a few of these learning to speak English as an additional language. The main first languages for these children are Polish and Hungarian. An above average number of children have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has designated special provision for children who have speech and language or communication difficulties. The children's centre offers a range of other activities, support and facilities to parents and community groups as part of its extended provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding children's centre and nursery school provides extremely high quality provision across all aspects of its work. Children achieve exceptionally well in all areas of learning because their learning and development are supported exceedingly well by very high-quality teaching and a rich and exciting curriculum. All children are highly valued and they flourish in the school's nurturing and inclusive environment. This means that by the time they leave school, standards are above average, with the majority of children working at or above the levels expected for their age in most areas of learning.

The school is so successful because the quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The headteacher is very experienced and is highly regarded by children, parents and staff. She has built a team of talented teachers, key workers and support staff who share her very high expectations. Together, they strive to do the very best for all children and their parents. All adults take very good account of the differing needs of children in the different parts of the setting. In the Rainbow Room, the children under three years of age are supported exceptionally well and childcare is of a very high quality. The youngest children are provided with stimulating experiences both indoors and outdoors which build on their own interests and help them to develop friendships and to learn new skills quickly. Older children are rightly expected to be more independent and they explore the world around them with increasing confidence. Adult-led activities provide very good challenge, with questioning and discussion used extremely well to ensure that teaching builds closely on children's different starting points.

Parents are extremely positive about the support given to their children. The children's centre plays a key role in the local community and promotes community cohesion very effectively. Leaders take excellent account of the needs of families and the wider community, and work very successfully to meet them. Through the children's centre they provide a very wide range of services that help parents to return to work or to learn new skills through activities such as 'Parent Study' groups and 'Looking at Children's Learning' sessions. Families from minority ethnic groups are very well integrated into the life of the centre and nursery and activities such as a Polish Day ensure that children develop a very good awareness for their age of the cultural diversity of society.

There is excellent provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with speech, language or communication difficulties who attend the Designated Special Provision (DSP). Children in the DSP are fully involved in school life and they receive highly skilled support from all adults within the school. This helps them make very fast progress in improving their skills.

Excellent welfare contributes very effectively to children's learning and to their outstanding personal development and well-being. At the time of the inspection, procedures to ensure that children are safe fully met statutory requirements. There are excellent links with outside agencies to safeguard children's well-being and to support those who are having difficulties. Throughout the school, relationships between adults and children are superb and they help to build children's confidence. Children love their time in the school and they participate with great enthusiasm in all activities. Children are extremely well behaved and they develop high levels of confidence and independence. Children show great concentration when working in small groups and persevere on activities as they explore their own ideas.

The school has an excellent capacity to improve further. Leaders at all levels, including governors, have set challenging priorities for future development, based on very accurate and highly reflective self-evaluation. Daily assessments of children's learning are very thorough and this information is used very effectively to plan the next stage of learning for individual children. The children's 'My Record Books' give a very clear picture of progress over the year and include helpful comments from key workers and other members of staff. With recent changes in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum the school has been trialling new systems for tracking children's progress over time and for comparing different groups. Leaders know that they have not yet got this quite right and that current systems are unwieldy. Although this does not affect children's learning on a day-to-day basis, it makes it difficult for leaders to identify trends in attainment over time so that the progress of different groups of children can be compared and any minor variations in progress tackled even more quickly.

The school has built a very strong partnership with parents and other agencies. The children's centre is used by a range of external agencies to bring support and services such as financial, health or employment advice to parents. This is highly appreciated by parents who speak very positively about the work of the children's centre and nursery. Comments such as 'the school provides a wonderful and stimulating environment for the children' and 'adults are very caring and thorough' accurately sum up some of the key strengths of this very successful setting.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the use of information about children's learning over time so that the progress of different groups can be compared more rigorously in order to check that all are doing equally well.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children enter the Nursery with levels of knowledge and skills that are lower than those expected for their age. They make very rapid progress and achieve extremely well because of very high quality provision and outstanding care and support. Consequently, standards are above average overall by the time they leave school, with the majority working at or above age related levels. Standards are particularly high in personal, social and emotional development with social skills promoted exceptionally well throughout the school day. In communication, language and literacy, children benefit from the sharp focus given to encouraging them to talk about their learning. This has an especially positive impact on children whose first language is not English, helping them to make excellent gains in developing speaking skills. Children get many good opportunities to explore the world around them and to learn and practise early counting skills. This ensures that progress in knowledge and understanding of the world and problem solving, reasoning and number is consistently good or better.

Specialist support for children in the DSP is supplemented well by everyday activities in the Nursery. Together, they combine to ensure that children's needs are met exceptionally well and progress towards meeting individual learning goals is excellent.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

'Every morning my child runs in to school, eager to get going.' This comment from a parent accurately sums up children's very positive attitudes towards learning. Children are very happy

at school and they quickly learn very good work habits such as perseverance and teamwork. Consequently, children are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school is a delight to be in because children are so happy and are so enthusiastic about what they are doing. This is reflected in the good rates of attendance, with nearly all absences being due to illness. Children talk excitedly about their work, for example when explaining about their shop where they are buying fruit and vegetables for a picnic. Children from different backgrounds get on very well together, and as they get older become increasingly independent and confident. They make an excellent contribution to the community by taking responsibility for simple tasks around school and sharing their learning with friends and families.

Children develop an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. They benefit enormously from the school's superb outdoor area, using the school gardens to grow their own food. They are very aware of the need to use outdoor resources sensibly and they diligently follow safety rules. School dinners are nutritious and are thoroughly enjoyed by children, helping them to develop an early awareness of the need to eat healthily.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 1

Adults are highly effective in promoting children's learning and development. They have a very good knowledge of how children learn and are creative and imaginative in their approach. They plan work that builds extremely well on the children's natural curiosity, making good use of assessments to find out what children already know and can do so that they can identify the next stage in their learning. Activities give children many opportunities to explore their own ideas, and topics are linked together effectively so that learning is purposeful. Visits are also used well to bring subjects alive. For example, children have been learning about bread. This work includes visits to a bakery, tasting different types of bread in school and making their own dough. In activities such as these, there is nearly always an adult available to support learning and this ensures that the right level of challenge is provided most of the time, although there are just a few occasions when there are missed opportunities to extend the learning of more able children. Role play opportunities promote learning very well. For example, in the shop, children practised telephone skills, developed basic writing skills by making lists and compared weights and shapes. Learning resources and equipment are of a high quality and promote learning extremely well.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 1

The welfare of the children is promoted exceptionally well in all areas of the setting. Adults are excellent role models for the children. Throughout the setting, relationships are excellent and all children are valued and respected. There are very strong links with outside agencies and safeguarding systems are consistently implemented by all staff and regularly monitored by senior leaders. A lot of thought is given to ensuring that children of different ages or in different parts of the school are equally well cared for. For example, the school has taken extremely good care to ensure that when children who only come to school part time are going home, other children are fully engaged in other activities so that they are not upset. Members of staff work very closely with parents, encouraging them to share information about how well their children are doing at home and ensuring that they are well informed about progress in school. There is

excellent communication with parents of children in the Designated Specialist Provision even though most travel to the school from further afield.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

This is a setting that is never standing still and is constantly striving to improve. The many changes that the school has gone through since its last inspection have been exceptionally well managed. The headteacher and other senior leaders are passionate about providing high quality care and support for children and their families and this is reflected in all aspects of the work of the children's centre and Nursery.

There are excellent systems for evaluating school effectiveness, involving the headteacher and leaders at all other levels. Leaders have worked diligently to link the different strands of provision together and as more and more services have been provided through the children's centre and childcare settings, they have monitored and reviewed effectiveness to check that all is going as well as it should. Training for professional development is used very well to support new members of staff so that they quickly get up to speed with the very high expectations of senior leaders and to ensure that consistency in practice is maintained across the school. The use of data is becoming stronger, although current arrangements are unwieldy because they are not computerised and their use to check the progress of different groups or to set targets is still being developed in the light of recent changes to the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

Governors play a very active part in school life. They keep a watchful eye on the quality of provision and are fully involved in planning for future development. The exceedingly complex funding arrangements for the children's centre and Nursery are managed very well and spending is carefully prioritised to have a positive effect on the quality of provision.

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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?	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

How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
The standards[1] reached by learners	2
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

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	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

How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
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?	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	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?	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**

6 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Croyland Children's Centre and Nursery School, Wellingborough NN8 2AX

I have asked Mrs Whelan and the other adults if they will read this letter to you.

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and letting us see your learning and how well you get on with others. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we found out. We agree with parents that you are lucky to come to such a great school and it is one you can all be very proud of. It was super to see so many happy faces in school!

Some of the things we found out about your school.

- You learn new things very quickly. This is because all of your helpers take excellent care of you and plan really fun things for you to do.
- Your teachers are brilliant which is why you learn so much and do so well.
- There are lots of things to do outside. It is wonderful that you are learning about eating the right things. I hope that the tomatoes in the outdoor area of the Rainbow Room grow quickly.
- You play together very happily and help each other when you are working.
- All the members of staff know how to help you and they give you excellent support when you are working.
- Your headteacher is doing a super job and she is helped very well by all the other workers in school.
- There are lots of interesting things for parents to do so that they can learn new things as well as you.

We have asked your teachers to work on one thing.

- Make more use of all the information they have about your learning to check that everyone is doing as well as they should.

You can help your teachers by continuing to try your best all of the time. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper

Lead inspector