

Cleator Moor Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112088
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337836
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Sheila Mawer

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 of pupils on the school roll	43
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Alison Walton
Headteacher	Mrs Valerie Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	9 April 2007
School address	Ennerdale Road Cleator Moor Cumbria CA25 5LW
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited six sessions and held meetings with the children, staff and governors. A range of documents were examined, including the school improvement plan, assessment information, safeguarding procedures, minutes of governors' meetings and records of monitoring and evaluation. The inspector also analysed the 37 questionnaires returned by parents and seven questionnaires completed by the staff.

- how well the children achieve from their starting points
- the opportunities children have to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- how well the school is providing children with the opportunities to learn about the wider world
- the effectiveness of the governors in holding the school to account through monitoring and evaluating its performance.

Information about the school

The school is located in a designated Health Action Zone in West Cumbria. It provides places for up to 80 children, aged three and four years old. Children attend part-time for either a morning or afternoon session. Almost all of the children come from White British families. A very small number of the children from minority ethnic backgrounds are learning English as an additional language. A broadly average number of children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has gained several awards including Healthy School Status and an Achievement Award. The school's status as a Leading Early Years Practitioner has enabled it to support other early years providers.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The school continues to provide an outstanding start to children's early education. In all key areas of provision, excellence has been maintained since the last inspection and good improvements have been made. The success of the school is firmly rooted in the superb leadership of the headteacher, a team of exceptionally skilled staff and highly effective governors. They are all, together, totally committed to the children's success, happiness and safety. They successfully implement the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework within a wonderfully stimulating and supportive ethos. A great strength of the provision is excellent partnerships with parents and carers. Parents value highly the tremendous support they and their children receive, especially in difficult times. The Nursery fully deserves its reputation in the locality as a leading practitioner of excellence. Strong links locally and further afield contribute significantly to first-rate community cohesion.

When children start school their skills are well below those typical for their age. Excellent teaching, rigorous assessment and an exciting curriculum enable all children to achieve exceptionally well. Outstanding progress is made in all areas of learning. In personal and social development the gains made by the children are particularly significant. The children show a real joy for learning and love their school. From the moment they enter they are active learners, exploring their ideas and interests in depth. Relationships are exemplary and help the children to be supremely happy and confident in their play. They behave exceptionally well, keep very healthy and safe and are extremely well prepared for the move to Reception.

Since the last inspection the children have been given more opportunities to use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Their skills are improving with the purchase of more resources. There is still more to do however to reach the excellent outcomes evident in all other aspects of learning.

The school has maintained its outstanding effectiveness since 1998 and goes from strength to strength. Through rigorous self-evaluation, leaders and staff are clearly aware of the school's considerable strengths and the areas to develop further. Within a positive culture of relentless improvement, the school has an excellent capacity to improve even further. It gives outstanding value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in ICT from good to outstanding by:
 - planning more opportunities for children to develop their skills in ICT

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- extending further the range of resources for ICT
- providing training for staff in the latest initiatives in technology.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children learn and achieve exceptionally well from their very low starting points. The majority of children exceed the expected levels for their age by the time they leave the school. High quality support and outstanding relationships have resulted in children making excellent progress. Children with special education needs and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language thrive in the welcoming and supportive environment. Their needs are identified early and generous staffing levels ensure that they make rapid progress and participate fully in all activities.

Good attendance and punctuality reflect the children's great enjoyment of school.

The exciting learning environment ensures that all children are extremely keen to learn and try out new things. They really enjoy working and playing together in 'construction' or in 'the builders' yard', but are equally happy initiating their own individual ideas in their paintings and designs. They regularly plan and review their own work, gaining important skills that prepare them exceptionally well for the future. The more able children have plenty of scope to test out their own ideas. For example, in the highly imaginative snow cave they worked happily together to present their interpretation of Father Christmas giving out presents in Lapland.

Excellent organisation, clear routines and outstanding role models provided by the staff result in the children behaving exceptionally well, respecting each other's differences and feeling totally safe. They use confidently a range of tools in their activities, taking turns and acting sensibly. The children act very responsively when tidying up after an activity. They all make very healthy choices at snack time and in their lunch boxes, knowing that, 'Too many sweets make your teeth fall out.' They understand clearly the importance of regular exercise and follow very good personal hygiene routines. Children participate in a wide variety of community and cultural activities. Different foods are enjoyed when they celebrate a range of religious festivals. Through extensive fund-raising, both locally and in the wider world, the children are developing a strong empathy with people who are less fortunate than themselves. When questioned about why they donate the school uniforms they have outgrown to children in Tanzania, they know that they are helping children who are more disadvantaged than they are.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Children's attainment ¹	2
The quality of children's learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
Children's behaviour	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Children's attendance ¹	2
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Excellent and sometimes inspirational teaching contributes strongly to children's outstanding learning and development. Highly effective assessment systems are used to plan rich and challenging activities across all areas of learning. Tasks are matched accurately to the needs and abilities of all children. This ensures that they make rapid progress. Children are exceptionally well supported and nurtured throughout their time in the Nursery. They are quickly helped to feel safe and secure in school through excellent induction arrangements. Support from outside agencies, for the most vulnerable children and their families, is very effective. Any barriers to learning are significantly reduced through these early interventions.

The school is organised exceptionally well to utilise fully the learning opportunities for the children both in and out of doors. Most teaching is done with a key worker supporting small groups of children. Favourable staffing ratios and high levels of expertise among the staff are essential ingredients in the children's outstanding progress. Within a highly stimulating environment and a vibrant curriculum there is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated tasks. There is a strong focus on letting the children explore and experiment through purposeful play. At the same time staff are highly skilled in knowing when to intervene to help accelerate the learning. For example, in one activity a group of children were sorting and assembling different figures for the Nativity scene. By very skilful intervention from the key worker, the children were able to retell the story accurately. When asked why Jesus was born in a stable, the children quickly replied, 'Because all the hotels were full.' Although good progress is being made in ICT, the children are not receiving regular access to a wider range of new technology

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such as interactive whiteboards.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership at all levels possesses a strong ambition to maintain excellence in all areas of provision. Leaders know the school extremely well and continually seek ways to enhance provision by meeting challenging targets. Through rigorous monitoring of the teaching and learning, all staff know what is expected of them and they meet demanding expectations. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. She is totally focused on enabling every child to reach their potential, whatever the circumstances. In this highly inclusive environment, the school is an extremely happy and successful place to learn. Staff morale is high and confirmed by the positive outcomes from the staff questionnaire. Adults are proud to be members of staff. Parents too are delighted to be part of this exceptional ethos and take a strong and active part in their children's learning and progress.

Procedures for safeguarding are rigorous and highly effective. At the time of the inspection they fully meet government requirements. Policies and procedures are very thorough and securely embedded throughout the school. The promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. The school evaluates its work rigorously in order to build on its many strengths within the school community and further afield. The school has had a marked impact on other schools in the locality through sharing its outstanding practice. Rich and varied opportunities are provided for the children to learn about the wider world. Above all the children, in their structured play, experience ideas 'beyond the school' through a strong promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The inspirational snow cave, for example, provided exceptional opportunities to learn about life in cold climates.

The governors perform their duties extremely well and share successfully in the work and direction of the school. Key areas of provision, such as safeguarding and community cohesion, are monitored and evaluated regularly by governors who produce incisive reports. Governors provide high levels of challenge and support and effectively hold the school to account.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

There was an excellent response to the questionnaire with the very large majority of parents and carers returning completed forms. The school clearly enjoys the complete confidence and support of every parent and carer who returned the questionnaires. They express very strong levels of satisfaction and there were no areas of concern. 'This is an excellent school. It's such a shame the children have to move on as they love it' is typical of the views held by parents. The very positive views of parents are reflected in the inspection report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cleator Moor Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 43 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	85	5	13	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	79	7	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	64	12	31	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	79	7	18	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	85	5	13	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	82	6	15	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	72	10	26	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	24	62	12	31	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	72	10	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	69	8	21	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	72	8	21	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	82	5	13	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	82	4	10	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its children's needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a child in their learning and development.
Attainment:	in other phases of school, for example primary schools, attainment is the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. However, there is no national average for three- and four-year-olds. Therefore, in inspections of nursery schools, inspectors take account of expectations in the age-related bands of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in nursery sessions and over longer periods of time.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 December 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Cleator Moor Nursery School, Cleator Moor CA25 5LW

I really enjoyed my visit to your lovely school. Thank you all for making me so welcome and helping me to find out about your school. I loved watching you all do exciting things and I saw how happy and settled you all are. Your school is excellent and I am very pleased that you and your parents think so too. Here are some of the best things:

- the staff are very proud of you all because you are all learning extremely well and making excellent progress
- you all love coming to school
- your behaviour is very good indeed and you are all very kind to one another
- the school is a very happy and safe place to learn
- your teachers plan really exciting things for you to do, especially in the wonderful snow cave
- your headteacher, the governors and all of the staff work very hard to make the school a very special place.

I saw how much you all enjoy working on the computers, finding the programmes and working out problems. I have asked the school to give you some extra things you can do with technology. I hope you will enjoy these activities and continue to work as hard as you do now.

You never know, it might stop raining in Cumbria and snow instead. Then it would be just like your snow cave. I wish you and your families a very happy New Year.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector

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