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New Mills Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112477
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	337942
Inspection dates	14-15 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Rajinder Harrison

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	3-4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Cara Williams
Headteacher	Miss Claire Inman
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2007
School address	Sett Close Off Market Street New Mills Derbyshire SK22 4AQ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eleven lessons, and held meetings with governors, children and staff and talked to parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including school policies, the school's development plan, its monitoring records and analyses of children's attainment and progress. Inspectors analysed seventeen questionnaires returned by parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- children's progress, particularly in communication, language and literacy skills
- the impact of the improvements in the accommodation and provision for outdoor play made since the last inspection
- children's personal, social and emotional development
- the management of teaching and learning and the role of governors in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.

Information about the school

This is a small nursery school where children attend part time. Children join the school in September, January and April so numbers increase as the academic year progresses. Almost all children are of White British heritage. The school has an average proportion of children who have special needs and/or disabilities.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The nursery provides a good education for all its children. It is a very calm, happy place where children thrive and develop well. Their keenness to learn makes a marked contribution to their good progress and achievement. Parents' and carers' views are overwhelmingly supportive, a typical comment being, 'the teachers are brilliant with the children and make them feel valued and special. My child can't wait to get here'. The inspection findings agree with these sentiments. Children really love being in the nursery and dash to explore what staff organise for them, even before their parents and carers have had time to say 'good-bye'. This level of confidence shows that most children feel safe, secure and happy at school. New children settle remarkably quickly, following the excellent example set by older children. Children show great levels of determination in working independently, for example in making their own snacks, which also reinforces their understanding of healthy living. Teaching children safe practices is evident, for example showing them how to cut pieces of fruit safely. Children work successfully in groups, including outdoors, where they dig for worms and show their care for the natural world when they comment that, 'We need to hold them softly in case they fall and get hurt'. Their behaviour is exemplary. They form excellent relationships with each other and all adults.

Children of all abilities achieve well. Children start with attainment levels that are expected for their age. Through good teaching and individual support and guidance, they progress well, and attain levels that are above those expected for four year olds. Many exciting activities and experiences help them grow in confidence and independence. Improved approaches to develop their language and literacy skills have helped raise achievement in this area of learning. Care arrangements are good and staff guide children carefully about how to stay safe and healthy. Children who need extra help with their learning achieve well because they receive carefully planned support to help them participate fully. The everyday curriculum, with its wide range of additional activities, is planned well to generate fun and excitement in learning. For example, children loved exploring each other's faces, amongst other things, under the magnifying glasses. Children enjoy many good opportunities to learn about and celebrate different cultural traditions and to contribute to the school community, for example by helping to keep the nursery tidy. They have fewer opportunities to contribute to the local community and to link with communities different to their own further afield.

Strong leadership and management have ensured good improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher involves all staff in identifying the most important improvement priorities and everyone is involved in developments that benefit

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children. Improving provision is high priority and given that leaders have been successful in doing so already, their capacity to improve the school further is good. The good achievement noted in the last report has been maintained and improved provision for developing literacy has had a significant impact on raising children's attainment in this area of learning. Improvements to the accommodation now offer an attractive environment where children have more space to explore independently and so learn and discover for themselves. Governors are very supportive of the school and work hard, for example to maximise the partnerships with parents and carers. They recognise that working in close harmony with parents is key to ensuring effective learning at school and at home. Good links with local communities and nearby schools support pupils' personal and academic progress well. The school is largely accurate in its self evaluation, but some aspects of monitoring lack rigour. This is true, for instance, of ensuring all that procedures are implemented in detail and followed through. In addition governors are not as involved as they should be in monitoring and evaluating the school's work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend children's experience by giving them greater opportunities to:
 - contribute more to their local community;
 - extend links with diverse communities in the wider world.
- Improve the monitoring and evaluation activities in the school by :
 - ensuring that all procedures are implemented rigorously;
 - involving governors fully in the process.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

2

When children start in the Nursery many lack confidence and independence and a considerable number struggle to listen effectively and follow instructions. However, they quickly learn the daily routines and expectations from older children and staff. They achieve well because the development of their thinking and independence skills are key priorities that underpin the activities they experience. As a result, they develop key social and early academic skills successfully, and are well prepared for transfer to primary school.

Children's progress is monitored carefully against their starting points. While most are at the levels expected of children of this age when they start, a few are less secure in aspects of literacy and numeracy, particularly reading, writing and calculation skills. Literacy skills are developed well through an increased emphasis on speaking and listening tasks and a closely focused approach to develop children's ability to link sounds to letters. Number rhymes and well planned counting and measuring activities help children achieve well in their mathematical skills. Staff observe as children explore and discover, intervening with good questions and suggestions to encourage them to try again. Children's perseverance and persistence is remarkable. Some concentrate for long periods, for example on computers to complete tasks such as selecting the right clothing for winter and summer, or to read or practise their

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writing. Children with special educational needs and who need additional help with their learning receive the individual guidance and support they need to achieve as well as their classmates.

Children settle confidently into school life, and most attend regularly. The youngest new children are sometimes upset at leaving their parents and carers but respond well to the comforting support staff provide. Their behaviour, whether working independently or with adults, is outstanding. They show kindness and respect by listening carefully and helping those who need a hand to do their work or get dressed. They share toys and books readily and wait their turn to speak. They have an excellent knowledge of a healthy lifestyle. For example, they offer advice about eating fruit because 'it gives you energy' and about drinking milk because 'you need strong bones to run'. They love playing outside and do so with increasing care. They understand well that everyone is different. They bathe their brown or white dolls with equal reverence and try unfamiliar fruits from 'Handa's Surprise' without reservation. Celebrating the festivals of diverse faiths and cultures helps them to value differences. Their gentle handling of mini-beasts, delight in observing through a magnifying glass and seeing a butterfly emerge from a caterpillar, reflects a deep sense of spirituality. Visits and visitors provide them with a good insight into a world beyond the nursery. They are well aware of the importance of re-cycling, 'so things in the world don't run out'. This level of maturity is outstanding. Children contribute well to their school community by helping to tidy up and by raising funds. With fewer opportunities to contribute to the local community, this aspect of their development is not as strong.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Children's attainment ¹	2
The quality of children's learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
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	2
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Children's attendance ¹	2

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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The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good because staff monitor children's progress carefully. They use the results of this analysis to identify any potential concerns and implement effective support strategies to help eliminate them. Individual assessments are recorded carefully in the children's personal folders and are valuably supported by examples of children's learning, including photographic evidence. The significant strength of this process is that after each assessment the next steps in learning are clearly identified and activities are planned accordingly. Teachers and support staff contribute to planning, and teach together so children learn to work confidently with a range of adults. Children have many opportunities to exercise free choice and do so confidently, but particularly enjoy adult led sessions because of the additional challenges staff offer through close levels of discussion. For example, while children happily dug in the mud, they learnt even more when answering questions and revising their digging techniques. Staff talk to children as they are working or playing, and ask questions to check their understanding. These conversations help staff assess children's progress accurately and set them further challenges. Occasionally, adult led sessions are too long and not exciting or demanding enough to hold children's attention fully.

The curriculum makes learning interesting and fun. All the areas of learning are addressed well, with an extremely strong emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional development. Teachers use story, singing, and role play to develop knowledge and understanding and encourage children to play and learn together. A high focus on talk and developing reading and writing skills has had a significant impact in this area of learning. Story and games 'sacks' go home with children each week, enabling parents to play a greater role in supporting their children's developing skills. Activities are suitably adapted to ensure children of all ages and abilities participate successfully. Learning is further enhanced through visits and visitors, including the emergency services. The school is exploring ways to extend children's understanding of communities other than their own more effectively. The curriculum is resourced well, with good use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning. The outside area is very popular and used well, although there are some limits on the space for wheeled toys and ball games. In support of children's physical development, the school is awaiting climbing apparatus for more adventurous play.

Welfare arrangements as a whole are good. Child protection and health and safety procedures all meet requirements. Links with other agencies are good and this ensures the school quickly seeks advice and guidance regarding individual children. Staff know the children and their families very well. This strength, coupled with regular contact with parents as they drop their children off or pick them up, ensures adults have excellent opportunities to discuss any individual issues or concerns and to share successes promptly. Parents appreciate this informal, friendly approach that allows them confidence to ask for help and advice when necessary. The school

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generally monitors its procedures in this area well, but such checks are not always as consistently robust as they should be.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets children’s needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, staff and governors ensure that children learn in a friendly and safe environment where children are valued and respected. The school’s ethos encourages a love of learning and a belief that all children should have the opportunity to achieve well. The headteacher has created effective teamwork and involves all staff in planning the way forward. She ensures that agreed improvements to academic provision are implemented consistently and that staff adapt and develop their practice to help children of all abilities achieve well. These strengths have played a major part in promoting children’s language and literacy skills and sustained the school’s success in children’s personal and social development.

The monitoring of teaching and learning is effective in highlighting strengths and areas for development. These checks are being stepped up to ensure that all staff have frequent guidance on how to improve their practice further. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and are very supportive. They ensure that the school’s resources, including its finances, are managed well to provide good value for money, and that safeguarding requirements are satisfactorily met. However, they are less closely involved in monitoring and evaluating the school’s work to ensure that all procedures are implemented rigorously and that the planned improvements impact successfully on children’s achievement and development. The school has an appropriate community cohesion plan that encompasses the local community extremely well. Partnerships with the local schools and volunteers in the community are good and support curriculum enrichment and children’s well being effectively. Members of diverse communities introduce children to other cultures and faiths. The school is looking to extend its links further afield so that children experience more of the world beyond New Mills.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and	2

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driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, commenting that the school is 'brilliant' and on how much their children love it. They are particularly positive about the caring ethos and the fact that they feel their children are safe in school. They feel that the teaching is good and their children make good progress. They say staff are very approachable, that parents are kept well informed and are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning. Inspectors agree that the school is good, and also recognise its outstanding features. One or two parents indicated in their comments on the questionnaires that they had concerns about children's behaviour and safety. The inspectors could not find any evidence to suggest that behaviour is less than outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at New Mills 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 17 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 52 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	76	4	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	82	3	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	71	4	24	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	76	3	18	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	82	2	12	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	82	3	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	71	5	29	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)	11	65	4	24	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	71	4	24	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	53	6	35	1	6		0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	59	6	35	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	76	3	18	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	88	2	12	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 all 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

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.



16 September 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of New Mills Nursery School, New Mills SK22 4AQ

We really enjoyed visiting your nursery school and seeing you learning and playing together so well. We are pleased to tell you that you go to a good school and we know that your parents think it is good too. They told us how much you enjoy coming to school each day. I particularly enjoyed playing in the mud with you and looking for 'wiggly worms'. I hope they are all safely back in the ground now. These are the things that we found out were especially good about your school.

- Your behaviour is excellent.
- You are sensible about playing safely and have an excellent understanding of what to do to keep fit and healthy.
- You get on really well with other children and all the adults who help you learn.
- You enjoy school and make good progress.
- Your teachers and other staff plan lots of exciting and fun things for you to do.
- All the staff look after you and care for you well.
- Those adults who manage and run your school want to help you learn the best that you can.

There are just two things that we have asked the school to do to make it even better, and we have asked all the adults to work on the following.

- Make sure that they provide more activities to help you learn about people who live in communities that are different to yours and that you have more opportunities to do things for other people around where you live.
- Make sure that all the adults who manage your school check that everything is the best it can be and that the right things are done to make your school even better.

We know that you will carry on having fun learning in your nursery. It was lovely to see such happy, friendly and kind children.

Yours faithfully

Rajinder Harrison
Lead inspector

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