

Peartree Way Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117080
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379344
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2012
Lead inspector	David Shepherd

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	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bridy Speller
Headteacher	Penny Allingham
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2009
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Age group	3–4
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Shepherd

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed teaching and learning in 11 sessions led by eight different teachers and early years practitioners. Meetings were held with the senior staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at safeguarding documentation and the school's analysis of its data on children's achievement. Conversations were held informally with a few parents and carers. Questionnaires from 80 parents and carers and eight staff were received and analysed.

Information about the school

This school is an average-sized nursery school. Seven children attend full-time and 82 part-time – 42 full-time and part-time during the morning and 47 during the afternoon. Since January 2012, 29 children who are early-threes attend Peartots pre-school part-time, 14 during the morning and 15 during the afternoon. A large majority of children are from a White British heritage with a very small minority from an Asian heritage. Few children speak English as an additional language. Nearly one quarter of the children are known to be eligible for free school meals. A small minority of children are at school action plus or have statements of special educational needs, mainly speech, language and communication difficulties or autism. The school has gained the Hertfordshire Quality Standards kitemark and a Gold Inclusion award.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because teaching is not more than good as occasionally it does not stimulate a few children, and parents and carers cannot easily identify the progress made by their children. In addition, senior staff do not check on children's progress regularly enough to make it better than good.
- Achievement is good. Attainment in the six areas of learning is broadly at expected levels. Progress is good in all areas, but particularly in speaking and communication, where many children who find these areas difficult make good progress and reach levels expected for their age.
- Teaching is good and enthuses and captivates children's interests. Teachers plan activities that are based upon children's interest and this encourages them to learn. On occasions, though, children are left too long without additional stimulus from adults during child-initiated activities, and a few are content to sit back and not take an active part during adult-led sessions, and this holds back their progress.
- Children's behaviour and safety are good. All parents, carers and staff who responded to their questionnaires are positive about behaviour and safety. Overall, children have good attitudes to learning. Their thoughtful behaviour contributes to a safe and orderly school. Children are looked after well and happily carry out activities indoors and outdoors.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching are carried out systematically and regularly. School performance is evaluated and managed accurately, mainly by the headteacher. Sustained improvements since the previous inspection have been brought about successfully by the headteacher and staff. School action plans identify key priorities appropriately, but do not always give enough detail about the measurable impact on children's outcomes that should result.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By December 2012, improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all staff consistently:
 - extend children’s learning during child-initiated activities
 - include all children during adult-led activities
 - enable parents and carers to track progress in each area of learning in their children’s learning journeys.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - training senior staff further in the techniques of monitoring and evaluation
 - providing more opportunities for senior staff to monitor and evaluate regularly in their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring that the success of the school’s actions to bring about improvement can be measured in terms of outcomes for children.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children start school, including the pre-school, with skills that are below those expected for their age in all areas of learning. In particular, a small minority of children start with skills in speech, language and communication that are well below those expected for their age. By the time they leave, all make good progress from their starting points and develop skills and knowledge that are broadly at expected levels in all areas of learning as evidenced by school data, standards seen during observations and in children’s learning journeys. Progress is quickest in speech, language and communication where some children make outstanding progress.

During the past three years, there have been no noticeable differences in achievement between boys and girls, those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because of the effective intervention strategies led by key workers and learning support assistants, especially in speech, language and communication skills. A few of these children do not achieve as much as their classmates because of their special educational needs, but the gap is narrowing because of the additional teaching provided for them, especially in speech, language and communication. A few children whose circumstances have made them vulnerable make exceptional progress given their particular needs.

Children enjoy stories, and this helps their early reading skills. During the inspection, children were captivated by the story of the Gingerbread Man. They listened to the story, recounted it in adult-led sessions through skilful questioning by key workers,

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and drew a story map of the events in the story. Children are learning the sounds made by letters, but some opportunities for children to practise and consolidate these skills are not always taken, and this slows the progress they make in reading.

Children develop good levels of independence and play happily by themselves or with their classmates. For example, some children relished playing with plastic ducks in a pond and sang tunefully, 'Five little ducks went swimming one day' as they carried out the actions to the song. Children love choosing activities to carry out indoors and outdoors, which they do enthusiastically.

The inspector endorses the views of parents and carers, almost all of whom think that the school helps their children develop skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics effectively. Staff provide good opportunities to develop these skills at the different levels of ability of the children. Inspection evidence indicates that parents and carers cannot easily identify the progress their children are making from their learning journeys.

Quality of teaching

All parents and carers, including those of the pre-school children, who responded to the questionnaire, indicate that teaching is good, and inspection evidence supports this view. Staff prepare equipment and activities that are based upon children's interests and abilities; consequently they become quickly engaged in choosing from the wide range of activities that are provided for them. This is particularly evident at the beginning of the day when parents and carers drop off their children and often stay and play with them as they get used to the transition from home to school. This ensures children's needs are met effectively. Strengths of the teaching include giving children opportunities to sing traditional songs, such as, 'Baa, Baa Black Sheep', enjoying words that rhyme, such as 'smell' and 'tell', and providing good opportunities to extend children's thinking by asking them searching questions. Occasionally, opportunities to involve some more reticent children in adult-led sessions are not taken, and some children are left playing independently for too long without adult-interaction to stimulate their thinking during child-initiated sessions, and, when this happens, teaching is satisfactory and not good.

The additional support received by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs through their individual educational plans enables many to achieve as well as their peers. This is because of suitable adjustments to activities and intervention programmes that match their different needs and abilities. This support, that includes speech therapy, is monitored regularly to measure its impact, and this enables future provision to be based on previous learning. This ensures good, and sometimes outstanding, progress.

Teaching children basic skills is, quite rightly, a priority. Promoting children's love of stories is effective in promoting children's early reading skills. Occasionally, the development of early reading skills is slowed down when opportunities to teach the

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sounds made by letters are not taken. The teaching of early writing is good because children have good opportunities to make marks on paper, and form letters correctly. Opportunities to practise counting are taken in a variety of contexts, but occasionally not enough are provided to help children solve problems and calculate.

Teaching promotes children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The garden with its planting boxes provides children with good opportunities to learn about the natural world and develop their curiosity about growing and insects. For example, in one session, children were learning how to plant potatoes. The teaching about different cultural traditions, such as St George's Day, Chinese New Year and Divali, promotes children's spiritual, social and cultural development effectively.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Almost all parents, carers and staff were positive about behaviour and safety in their questionnaires, and inspection evidence corroborates with these views. Children, including those with identified behavioural needs, behave well and are responsive to adults because relationships are good. There is no evidence of bullying of any kind. Children are sensible in their work and play, and talk to each other and adults respectfully and maturely.

Children's behaviour was good throughout the inspection and it is clear that this is the norm. For example, children line up properly to go into their key worker groups after outside play sessions. They follow instructions promptly, showing positive attitudes and are ready to listen and learn. They concentrate well, for example, when making aliens, and learn to share the materials they are using so that everyone has a turn. They are proud of their work, and readily show it to adults because they know it will be received well with positive comments that promote their self-esteem.

Children's good behaviour and abilities to play with other children ensure they are developing a good understanding of how to keep safe and the risks they face if they cause accidents to happen. For example, they ride around the path on bikes, but slow down when someone is in the way. However, this was not the same in the pre-school when two boys rode their bikes without looking out for others. They learn how to stay safe in the sun and understand the need to drink water.

Leadership and management

The headteacher successfully communicates to staff drive and ambition for improvement. Appropriate priorities are identified that are implemented well. Planning does not always indicate the expected measurable outcomes for children, and this reduces its effectiveness. In spite of this, monitoring and evaluation are having a positive impact on achievement and provision. For example, sustained improvements are evident in children's achievements in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, and creative development, and improvements are noted in speech, language and communication for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. In addition, improved provision for outdoor learning is providing

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children with greater opportunities to develop their physical and social skills. The key issue from the previous inspection has been implemented effectively. All these improvements indicate the school has a good capacity to sustain further improvement. However, too much rests with the headteacher at present. An extensive programme of professional development and performance management, including for provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, is contributing effectively to school improvement. However, some senior staff do not have secure expertise in the techniques of monitoring and evaluation, nor enough opportunities to check performance in their areas of responsibility.

The curriculum is planned effectively to meet children's individual needs. The strength of the curriculum is its provision for outdoor education with its wild area, garden area and newly established covered area. The wide range of learning opportunities provided supports children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

The governing body is supportive and keen for the school to do well. It keeps abreast of events at the school, but does not provide enough challenge to monitor improvements. Safeguarding procedures comply fully with statutory requirements.

All groups of children achieve well because the school promotes equality of opportunity for all groups and tackles discrimination effectively. Children whose circumstances may have made them vulnerable are identified effectively and appropriate resources allocated to meet their needs, and there are examples of some of these children making outstanding progress.

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 pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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 pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



24 May 2012

Dear Children

Inspection of Peartree Way Nursery School, Stevenage, SG2 9EA

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed meeting and talking to you. You go to a good school where adults work hard to prepare you for the future. The progress you make in the different activities is good. Here are some of the best things I found.

- You enjoy school and get on very well with each other.
- You are very safe and work in a calm, colourful and stimulating environment.
- You like your key workers and learning support assistants and try your best to please them.
- You are well mannered and courteous to each other and adults.
- You are enthusiastic about all the different activities provided for you. You particularly like playing in the sand and riding bikes outside.
- You really enjoy planting seeds and potatoes and watching them grow.

I have asked your headteacher, teachers and the governing body to do two things to make your school even better.

- Make sure that all of you take part eagerly in the different activities.
- Make sure that the plans that the school has to help you learn are working well.

All of you can help by continuing to work very hard.

Yours sincerely

David Shepherd
Lead inspector

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