

The Lincoln St Giles Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120365
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327258
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Melanie Markham
Headteacher	Fiona Whimster
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2006
School address	Addison Drive Lincoln LN2 4LQ
Telephone number	01522 531876
Fax number	01522 527193
Email address	enquiries@st-giles-nur.lincs.sch.uk

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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, with additional clerical support. The inspectors visited twelve lessons, and held meetings and discussions with governors, staff, groups of children, parents and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at a sample of policies, records of meetings and correspondence, monitoring documentation, children's records, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 113 questionnaires from parents, 15 staff and 37 children were received and analysed.

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

- whether all groups of children are identified for tracking and if all groups of children make equally good progress
- whether the rate at which children acquire the range of communication, language and literacy skills has quickened and if equality of access to the curriculum for all groups is assured
- the impact of staffing changes and developments within the governing body on the effectiveness of leadership and management
- how effectively the school promotes equality of opportunity for different groups and to what extent the school is successful in promoting community cohesion beyond the immediate locality.

Information about the school

This is a large nursery school, which is situated in a large housing estate to the north east of the City of Lincoln. A greater number of children than is usually found have a learning difficulty and/or a disability and statements of their special educational needs. Nearly all children are from White British backgrounds and few children speak a language other than English at home. Attainment on entry to the school is below that typically expected. Children are admitted after their third birthday and attend full or part-time. Children have different lengths of time in the nursery. The oldest children may have six terms but the majority attend for only three terms. Some children are referred from Children's Services to attend part or full time. Children are organised in to four classes. Most move on to Chad Varah Primary School, though some transfer to five other schools.

There is a Children's Centre and day care facility adjacent to the nursery, which opened in 2008. Other care is provided by Magical Moments Day Care. These provisions are not managed by the governing body and are therefore inspected separately. A variety of family support and learning sessions are offered on site. The school has achieved a Quality Mark for Basic Skills, the Gold Clean Air Award and a Healthy Schools Award.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The provision at St Giles Nursery School is outstanding and results in excellent outcomes for individuals and groups of children. Exceptional leadership, a highly committed staff team and strong partnerships with governors and parents have all ensured that these outcomes have been consistent over several years. Children's attainment, the quality of their learning and the progress they make, regardless of their background, educational need or ability is outstanding. This is matched by the exceptional levels of personal skills they develop, with children often displaying a level of maturity well beyond that expected for their age by the time they leave the nursery.

It is evident immediately on entering the nursery that St Giles is a haven of happiness and joy. Children's enthusiasm and exceptional levels of enjoyment are due in no small part to the inspirational learning opportunities that they are offered, both indoors and outdoors. An array of exciting and challenging activities is carefully planned and taught by exceptionally skilled teachers and teaching assistants. Everyone plays their part in ensuring that children feel safe, valued and well cared for.

Staff and governors employ highly effective systems to monitor and evaluate their work and to ensure that everyone continues to share high expectations for children's success. Everyone shares an understanding of the school's strengths, but there is no complacency. Leaders recognise that the next step is to build on the excellent opportunities the children are offered to understand and play their part in their local community, by extending these experiences beyond their immediate area. Exceptional new programmes have been introduced to ensure that the low levels of children's communication, language and literacy skills become a real strength. Governance, judged to be good at the time of the last inspection and which is now excellent, is another example of the school's outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to promote community cohesion by ensuring that children have further

opportunities to experience life beyond their immediate locality.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children often enter with low levels of communication, language and literacy and few personal, social and emotional skills. They make excellent progress so that when they leave the setting, most achieve the levels expected of them in all areas of their learning and very many exceed them. All groups receive specially tailored and extremely effective support so they progress outstandingly well from their starting points. The quality of children's learning is outstanding and can be seen in the way, for example, children quickly become able to sustain their concentration without adult direction for long periods, take the lead in directing their own learning and show their determination to solve problems for themselves. They are well practised in using their often outstanding levels of oracy and numeracy skills. Their personal skills also develop exceptionally well. They are prepared extremely well for their future lives. They show obvious delight in engaging with their work and love to work hard. This is reflected in their good attendance and their responses to the questionnaires.

Children are confident in the company of adults in the setting with whom they enjoy trusting relationships. They talk maturely about safety routines around the building and the site and move around the setting extremely sensibly. For example, they remind their parents to close the classroom doors and lock the school gate behind them. Exemplary behaviour results from excellent management and consistently positive reinforcement by staff and ensures not a moment is lost to learning. Not only does children's outstanding moral development include a clear sense of right and wrong, but they have the ability to reflect on their actions and the determination to help others to do the right thing. Children have a remarkable understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. They independently adhere to strict routines for hygiene, including hand washing, the use of sanitizing gel and the use and disposal of tissues. They are proud to grow, cook and eat the produce from their own garden. They take great delight in daily outdoor play and indoor sessions in the large soft physical playroom or the nursery gym. They say that exercise is an important part of their daily routine.

Children greatly enjoy taking responsibility for nursery equipment, as monitors or in tending to the gardens. They are well aware that they help to keep the nursery day running smoothly. They regularly help to raise money for charity. They are excited to involve parents and members of the local community, for example, in healthy environmental walks and litter picking. Squeals of delight are regularly heard as children demonstrate their outstanding appreciation of the awe and wonder they experience every day, as, for example, they squeeze and describe handfuls of soggy seaweed. Children embrace and celebrate the different faiths, cultures and nationalities represented in nursery. For example, they talk confidently about their similarities and differences and as one volunteered, they 'know we are all special'.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Children's attainment ¹	1
The quality of children's learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do children achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do children feel safe?	1
How well do children behave?	1
To what extent do children adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do children contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Children's attendance ¹	2
How well do children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

High quality teaching is underpinned by an excellent knowledge of how young children learn and develop and of how to plan a curriculum which can meet each individual's needs and interests. Adults get to know children extremely well. The excellent 'Snapshot' and more detailed 'Spontaneous' observations and assessments build a comprehensive profile or 'Look What I Can Do Book' for each child. Next steps in learning are clearly identified and the curriculum modified accordingly, often on a daily basis. Parents say they treasure these books and all the assistance they get in helping guide their children's learning. Children get regular feedback so they are clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do next. This detailed knowledge also ensures that additional support can be accurately targeted to help all children make the best of the opportunities provided, that everyone is included equally and therefore will do exceptionally well. The school works very closely with families, children and a wide range of agencies to make sure that any possible barriers to learning are minimized. Social and emotional needs are exceptionally well catered for, as are the needs of those who find learning more difficult or easier, or those who may be in the early stages of learning English. Because staff know the children and their families so well, any child who may be vulnerable is identified swiftly and the outstanding systems for pastoral care ensure their needs are extremely well met.

Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to organise the setting and because of this the day runs seamlessly. They plan conscientiously for activities which will delight and stimulate children and engage them in their learning. They are highly skilled at teaching children good learning behaviour and ensure that children develop a remarkable tenacity to see things through. During well chosen adult-led activities they ensure children make excellent progress, for example, in their

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

speaking and listening skills, by modelling language and key vocabulary correctly and encouraging the correct response. Adults are highly skilled in using well formed and probing questions to really get children to think for themselves. Most adults are really clear about the desired learning outcome of every task and therefore make this very clear to children. They are also skilled in knowing when to stand back and give children time to experiment for themselves.

A delightful learning environment is provided both indoors and outdoors to secure exceptional levels of enjoyment. Topic themes and related activities ensure that children get lots of opportunities to revisit their learning and apply their skills in different ways. Importantly, children are quickly taught to direct and conduct their learning independently so that even when they think they are having lots of fun playing, they are continuing to make excellent progress in their learning.

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
The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Without exception, everyone spoken to said they could not speak highly enough of the headteacher's inspirational leadership. Her professional knowledge, drive and enthusiasm and indeed passion for early years' education is communicated clearly to and shared equally by the staff team. Several spoke of her 'high expectations' and how 'she really makes you think about what can be done to improve provision and outcomes for the children'. Responsibility for driving forward improvement is shared; the recent changes to leadership have been managed without detriment to standards and achievement and have added further strengths to the leadership team.

Governors offer an exceptional degree of challenge and support to school leaders and make regular checks to ensure statutory duties are met and that the school provides outstanding value for money. Everyone knows well the strengths and areas which are a focus for improvement. Consequently, leaders have quite rightly already identified that whilst children enjoy a plethora of high quality opportunities to engage with and support partners in the local community and celebrate diversity within the school, they do not have as many opportunities to experience life beyond St Giles.

Staff, governors, parents, children and professional partners see themselves as being part of the St Giles family. Everyone's views are sought regularly, valued and acted upon, in accordance with the school's ethos, which ensures that all are included equally and prompt action is taken wherever necessary to ensure that this remains the case. At the time of the inspection, the policies seen and the practice observed in school demonstrated that all requirements regarding safeguarding are met and the welfare of children is extremely well organised. All staff interviewed and observed

were universally clear about risk assessments and procedures and adhered to extremely strict routines rigorously. These routines were also spoken of most highly in parent interviews and the responses to questionnaires, as were the high degree to which parents say they feel included and welcomed to participate in school life.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	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 community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

All but one of the questionnaires was overwhelmingly positive in their views about the nursery. A good number had handwritten comments indicating high levels of satisfaction, which included praise for 'kind caring staff', 'an excellent educational environment', 'a place which supports learning in the best possible way' and 'first class A*', 'I couldn't have asked for a better start for my children'. Inspectors agree with parents' positive responses.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Lincoln St Giles Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 112 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 142 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	103	9	0	0

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. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the children's work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which children are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the children's attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a child in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the child; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- 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.



25 June 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of The Lincoln St Giles Nursery School, Lincoln, LN2 4LQ.

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing many of the wonderful things that you do. Your nursery school is outstanding. It helps you to make excellent progress in your learning so that by the time you leave, you are often able to understand and do many more things for yourselves than most children who are the same age as you.

What we found out about your nursery school

- You are very excited about everything you do at school and really enjoy coming.
- You feel very safe because everyone takes such good care of you, and you know a lot about keeping yourself safe and healthy too.
- Your behaviour is brilliant and you really enjoy helping others in lots of different ways.
- The adults who work with you get to know you very well indeed and are extremely good at planning things that will help you to learn as well as you can.
- They know what sorts of things you like to do and make sure that you have lots to do which everyone can enjoy together.
- The adults who lead the school do an excellent job in making sure everything is as good as it can be.
- Your families and those who look after you at home are very important to everyone at the nursery.

What we have asked your nursery school to do now

- Help you to find out what life is like in other places that you do not know.

You can help by carrying on trying your best in all that you do. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Joanne Harvey
Lead inspector

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