

Parklands Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121788
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	327568
Inspection date	14 May 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 on roll	
School (total)	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Olizer
Headteacher	Sarah Brooking
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2006
School address	Spinney Hill Road Northampton NN3 6DW
Telephone number	01604 642118
Fax number	01604 495369

Age group	3-4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small nursery school that accommodates 70 children aged between three and four years. Most children attend part time but a small number attend both the morning and afternoon sessions. A below average proportion have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A small number of children are from ethnic minority backgrounds but very few are new to learning English. The nursery school is now integrated within the children's centre that serves families in the local community. This extended provision did not form part of the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school makes outstanding provision for all its children. It has built on the good practice observed at its previous inspection and children make an excellent start to their education. Through excellent leadership and management, the headteacher, staff and governors have established a very calm, orderly but vibrant environment where every child makes outstanding progress. The school's strengths lie in the very high quality professionalism of all staff and their passionate drive to make sure every child has the support and guidance they need to be successful learners. The school has embraced totally the Early Years framework for children aged 0-5 and made it its own by examining how each child learns, and then organising the activities and experiences they need to thrive and achieve. The school works hard to maximise its partnerships with parents and carers. This is because it recognises that working in close harmony with them is key to ensuring effective learning at school and at home. Parents and carers are highly delighted with how the school involves them even before their children join the nursery. Typical praise includes, 'The nursery is fantastic! My child can't wait to get here. All the staff really care about the children, and that's what matters.' These excellent partnerships extend to other Early Years settings within the local area, so that staff are always looking outwards to identify improvements. While links with neighbouring primary schools are good, arrangements to support children's effective transfer to their primary schools are less well developed.

Excellent provision in helping children to learn and achieve, coupled with outstanding promotion of children's welfare, are the keys to the outstanding progress children make in all areas of learning, including their excellent personal development and well-being. By the time they leave the nursery, children are working at well above the levels normally expected from children at the age of five. Staff assess the progress each child makes meticulously and share this information readily with parents so that they are kept fully informed. Children who may not be making sufficient progress are identified early so that staff can help them. For example, children not confident in speaking English when they first start receive additional help so that they quickly gain the skills and catch up with their classmates. Children 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 goodbye. This level of confidence shows that children feel safe and happy at school. Children show great levels of determination in working independently, for example in mixing their own paints and exploring their fingers, amongst other things, under the digital microscopes. Others work successfully in groups, including outdoors, where they push each other on wheeled toys and fill buckets of sand to haul up with the pulleys, commenting that, 'We need two people because it is too heavy.' Their behaviour is exemplary. They form excellent relationships with each other and all adults.

Teachers and nursery nurses are very effective in asking questions that require children to think. This makes a significant contribution to the excellent progress children make in speaking and listening. Children prepare their own snacks and by choosing healthy options, this reinforces their understanding of healthy living. Teaching children safe practices is very evident, for example showing them how to cut pieces of fruit safely. The outdoor area is much improved and children love their garden where they 'mulch' their compost to make the vegetables grow better. Group time is planned very carefully so that children learn with their family worker. All of its work shows, beyond doubt, that it has outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the arrangements for children's effective transfer to their primary schools.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children enter the nursery school with skills that are slightly above those typical for their age. They make outstanding progress and reach standards that are well above those expected, with many children already working at the early learning goals expected for children at the end of their Reception Year. Children achieve so well because developing their thinking and problem solving skills are key priorities that underpin the activities they experience. Children's progress is monitored rigorously against their starting points in each area of learning. Aspects of literacy, particularly reading and writing, and calculation skills in numeracy are sometimes less secure. These are developed particularly well through speaking and listening tasks, and number rhymes and counting and measuring activities. Children who need additional help with their learning receive the support they need to achieve as well as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their sense of awe and wonder is developed through, for example, growing fruit and vegetables in their garden, watching chicks hatch, nurturing their tadpoles, playing in the snow and visiting local woodlands. The celebration of the diverse faiths and cultures helps them value differences. Visits and visitors provide them with an excellent insight into a world beyond the nursery. They show kindness and respect by listening carefully and helping those who need a hand to do their work or get dressed. High levels of independence are reflected in the way they organise their play and engross themselves in activities from the moment they arrive. They are very aware of the importance of recycling 'so things in the world don't run out'. Children are very good at tidying up and make a very strong contribution to keeping the nursery an exciting place in which to learn. Most attend regularly because they love school. They respond exceptionally well to the rich activities provided for them. They develop key social and early academic skills very successfully, and these prepare them extremely well for transfer to primary school.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 1

The quality of day-to-day assessment of children's learning is very good. Staff monitor children's progress extremely well and review their achievements regularly. They use the results of the analysis of that progress to identify any potential underachievement and then to put in place effective support strategies to help eliminate it. The current focus on talk is a good example of this. Staff talk to children as they are working or playing, and ask questions to check their understanding. This helps staff accurately assess children's progress and set them further challenges. Expectations are very high and most children are very confident speakers. Individual assessments are recorded in the children's personal folders. These contain examples of children's learning, including photographic evidence. The significant strength is that after each assessment, the next steps in learning are clearly identified and activities are planned accordingly.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 1

Children's welfare is high priority and care arrangements are outstanding. All adults who come into contact with children are vetted appropriately. Child protection and health and safety procedures all meet requirements. Staff know the children and their families very well. This, 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 the confidence to ask for help and advice when necessary. Parents and carers also value the 'lunch club', which they regard as a valuable social occasion. Here, children who attend all day and those who leave late after the morning session or arrive prior to the afternoon session, have excellent opportunities to interact with staff and each other.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher is a highly effective leader and manager. She inspires staff to extend their expertise by providing them with good training opportunities and by delegating responsibilities that allow them to play to their strengths and interests. All staff are well qualified and take part in regular training to benefit themselves and the children. Everyone is involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's work and identifying where improvements are needed. Governors are very knowledgeable and supportive of the school and its work. They make planned visits to review aspects of the school's work and when necessary, are prepared to challenge staff. Governors make an excellent contribution to the school's development plan and to its self-evaluation. Their commitment to the local community and in helping children learn about communities in the wider world is excellent. The school's links to partner primary schools, while generally good, are less well developed with regard to sharing common assessment procedures that ensure children build on what they have already learnt. The school's view of its performance is accurate. Staff are determined to do everything necessary to provide children with the best possible start to their learning.

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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?	2
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	1
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	1
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**

15 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Parklands Nursery School, Northampton NN3 6DW

We really enjoyed visiting your school and seeing you learning and playing together so well. We are delighted to tell you that you go to an outstanding school and we know that your parents think it is fantastic too. They told us how much you enjoy going there each day. These are the things which we thought were brilliant.

- You enjoy learning and make excellent progress.
- You get on really well with other children and all of the adults who help you learn.
- Teachers and adults plan lots of exciting and fun things for you to do.
- All the staff look after you and care for you extremely well.
- Those adults who manage and run your school want to help you learn the best that you can.

There is just one thing which we think would make your school even better, so we have asked all the adults to work on the following:

- make sure that they work even more closely with your next school so the teachers there know exactly how well you have been learning in the nursery.

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

Yours faithfully

Rajinder Harrison

Lead inspector