

Knowles Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110197
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	337446
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Pegg
Headteacher	Marie Gordon
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 learning activities, and observed the work of three teachers. They spent about a third of the time in school observing learning, held meetings with governors and staff and spoke with parents and children. Inspectors observed the Nursery and the children's centre's work and looked at a range of documentation including the nursery improvement plan, assessment information, safeguarding documentation, curricular planning and photographic evidence provided by the school. In addition, the responses of 28 parents' and carers' questionnaires were analysed and their comments taken into account.

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

- how well more able children learn
- the children's progress in the areas of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy
- whether teaching and learning are stronger than at the time of the previous inspection
- how well practitioners contribute to the school's monitoring and evaluation processes.

Information about the school

Knowles Nursery School provides part-time provision for children aged three and four. There is an attached children's centre, 'Saplings', which is housed in accommodation that has been open for one year. This provides a range of integrated services to support children and their families. The centre is managed by the governors of the school. A majority of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds with many of the families of these children originating from the rural Sylhet region of Bangladesh. A third of the children are at an early stage of learning English and the children speak 11 different languages.

The Nursery has gained the Healthy Schools 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: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Knowles Nursery provides an excellent start to children's education. Children are exceptionally happy and are highly stimulated by the wide range of opportunities provided. Planning is excellent, and as a result, all groups of children make rapid progress. Children are very keen to learn and they arrive, and leave, with happy and smiling faces. They eagerly hurry to talk with staff on arrival and delight in showing their parents or carers what they have achieved when they are picked up at the end of the session. The children's very high level of confidence in the whole of the nursery environment, and particularly when talking with staff, shows that they feel safe and are valued. Parents are unanimous in their support, and the many positive comments they made are summed up by the parent who wrote, 'Our daughter loves going to nursery. She has many friends and is very fond of the staff. They are friendly, supportive and approachable. This is the nursery for our little girl.'

The arrangements for ensuring the children's welfare and safety are very thorough and staff take great care of each child. Parents and carers particularly value this. Because the staff manage the children so well and are very sensitive to each child's social and emotional needs, behaviour is excellent and enables the children to make the best use of the freedom that they are given to choose their activities. There is an all-pervading atmosphere of support and endeavour throughout all the rooms in the Nursery which underpins the children's learning. Community cohesion is at the heart of the work of all staff in both the Nursery and Saplings. The cultures and faiths of all children are celebrated, with parents sometimes taking leading roles.

Achievement is excellent. Children have a very wide range of starting points when they enter the Nursery with many having had very limited experience of mixing with other children before they join. However, this problem is receding as an increasing number of parents and carers take advantage of the wide range of services and provision that are offered in Saplings. Children have a real joy in learning through play and take on responsibilities very well. Their rapid progress is due to the high quality provision. Children are known exceptionally well by all members of staff and each contributes to the wide-ranging and sophisticated observations that are made which pinpoint children's progress and their future learning needs. These assessments are expertly used to plan the next steps in an excellent curriculum which excites and challenges children to learn. Parents are encouraged to contribute to the school's record system by providing information about children's achievements at home. Teaching is of consistently high quality and usually outstanding. It is provided by practitioners who are highly reflective and who constantly strive to improve. They develop children's skills exceptionally well through activities that build sensitively on the children's own interests and predilections.

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This outstanding provision ensures that by the time they leave the Nursery almost all children have successfully developed the aptitudes typically found for their age and many exceed them.

Leadership and management are excellent. There is very close teamwork among all the staff and morale is high. All practitioners take direct responsibility for checking provision. The very good arrangements for monitoring provision and children's progress support the accurate self-evaluation strategies that lead to a high quality improvement plan. Governance is good. Governors support the Nursery well and have played a key role in the development of Saplings and securing the new accommodation. However, at present, they are over-reliant on the headteacher for information about the school's provision and children's achievement because they do not take enough opportunity to visit the Nursery to check provision. Nonetheless, there has been an improvement in both provision and children's achievement and the capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the role of governors by establishing a systematic programme of visits to the Nursery.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**1**

Progress for all groups of children is outstanding. Boys and girls achieve equally well, and the more able are extended particularly well. Children enjoy each minute of their time in the Nursery, busily mixing with others and investigating. The rapid development of skills across all areas of learning prepares the children exceptionally well for their future learning. They make particularly good progress in their personal, social and emotional skills. Their development of speaking and listening skills is also rapid particularly for the many children who are at an early stage of learning English. They perform extremely well in the classroom. They enjoy sharing books together, sitting and talking together about the illustrations and making up their own endings. The staff are particularly adept at building children's reasoning and numeracy skills by systematically ensuring that counting, problem solving and calculation skills are employed in all activities. Hence, when children were rolling out and making jam tarts to put in the oven, they demonstrated and developed their understanding of shapes and numbers (by counting tarts), and solved challenges along the way, such as cutting out as many as possible. Children love attending, although some children's attendance is affected because they take extended holidays in Bangladesh. Children feel secure and happy and play very safely with others. They make decisions about what they want to explore and also work with enthusiasm in adult-led activities. The children know that they must take responsibility for caring for themselves and others. They adopt healthy eating habits by choosing drinks and snacks like fresh fruit, which is freely available throughout each session. They wash their hands before eating and know about the importance of brushing their teeth.

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

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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?

The support provided to ensure the health and well-being of children and their families is outstanding both in the Nursery and in Saplings. This is especially the case for those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable or at risk. Children settle and very quickly form trusting relationships with their 'key worker'. Self-esteem and confidence grow rapidly even for children who speak no English or have no previous experience of socialisation beyond their extended family. Bilingual staff make a strong contribution to supporting children who are at an early stage of learning English and this extends to the sessions held in the Saplings on a regular basis, including the teaching of English as a second language for parents. Indeed, access to the full range of services that families need is readily available. The staff in Saplings work closely together as a team and are supported by a range of health professionals as well as family support services.

Teaching and the learning environment have significantly improved since the last inspection. Practitioners are highly skilled in promoting the children's learning. The

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

school's philosophy, which centres on building on from each child's interest, is evident in all activities. Practitioners have a detailed knowledge of how young children learn and develop. The learning environment is very well organised to cover all areas of learning inside and out and offers children a wide range of stimulating experiences. The book and puzzle corner is particularly popular with children. Interventions are exceptionally skilful and are at the heart of the teaching. All the practitioners take responsibility for noting achievements of all children, not just those in their key groups. Planning is comprehensive and includes full daily evaluations of activities and what children have gained from them.

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?

The vision of the headteacher has been key in developing the excellence in provision and children's achievement. Self-evaluation is built on a close understanding of strengths and areas for development. Almost all aspects of leadership and management, including the arrangements for safeguarding children, are excellent and there are clear plans to develop further the whole site including expanding the already wide range of services that Saplings provides. Action planning is of good quality and governors are keenly aware of their need to develop their role in checking provision for themselves. There is a deep commitment to equal opportunities and the school's sophisticated monitoring ensures that all groups of children succeed.

Everyone's views are sought regularly, valued and acted upon. There are highly positive relationships with the community, and the school and children's centre are highly responsive to local community needs. A wide range of strong and effective partnerships is used to enhance all aspects of the school's provision. In addition, a large number of teachers and professionals from other nurseries and schools make visits, and staff from the Nursery also support a number of courses provided by the local authority. The school and Saplings together form a highly cohesive community which is of central importance to the harmony of the local area.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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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	
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1 1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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

About a third of the families who attend the school are represented in the overwhelmingly positive response to the questionnaires. Although few parents made comments on the questionnaires, they were positive and supportive and, in particular, they praised how much their children enjoy the Nursery due to the high quality of the staff. The inspection team fully endorses these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Knowles 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 inspection team received 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 96 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	86	4	14	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	79	5	18	1	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	82	5	18	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	79	6	21	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	86	4	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	71	8	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	64	9	32	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)	21	75	7	25	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	75	7	25	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	64	9	32	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	79	6	21	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	86	4	14	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	89	3	11	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.



18 January 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Knowles Nursery School, Milton Keynes MK2 2HB

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We had such a nice time! Talking to you and your parents and carers helped us to see how well your school is doing.

You all really enjoy being at your school. Your parents told us that many of you would like to attend even at the weekend! You will be pleased to know that your school is helping you to learn very quickly. We think it provides you with a wonderful education.

We liked:

- the excellent progress that you make
- the way you join in activities right from the start
- how quickly those who speak another language learn English
- your wonderful behaviour
- the way that you enjoy helping each other and learning together
- the close care that your key worker takes of you ' we were very impressed how well you learned in your group time with them
- the exciting things that your teachers provide for you to do
- the way your teachers keep notes of how well you are doing.

Your headteacher and all the adults working in the Nursery do a great job. Everyone keeps trying to do even better for you. We have asked the governors, who help your school, to visit more often. Then they can see how well you are doing for themselves.

We hope that you will continue to enjoy your learning as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector

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