Northfleet Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118229
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358292
Inspection dates	21–22 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Marshall

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeremy Strike
Headteacher	Panna Nagar
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2008
School address	140 London Road Gravesend DA11 9JS
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons, observed three teachers as well as a number of key workers and other adults, talked with children and held meetings with staff, school leaders and governors. They evaluated 54 parental questionnaires. They looked at documents including school policies, children's progress data, attendance figures, school development planning and a range of children's work.

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

- To what extent do staff use assessment to support and challenge children's learning and secure outstanding achievement?
- How effective are leaders, particularly governors, in checking, reviewing and taking actions to raise standards, particularly in creative development?
- How effective is the school's care, guidance and support in ensuring children achieve well in their personal development and well-being?

Information about the school

Northfleet is an average sized nursery school that serves the local area as well as the wider surrounding area. Children join the school at different times throughout the school year; they attend either a morning or afternoon session with an option of a lunchtime place. The children come from both White British families and a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Almost a third of the children speak English as an additional language and of these most join the nursery with little or no English. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average; they have a range of needs that include moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication issues and physical disabilities.

The school has gained a number of awards, for example the Healthy School Award and the Platinum Travel Plan, as well as renewing its Investors in People this term and receiving the International Schools Award for creating links with other countries.

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

This is an outstanding school. Since the last inspection, staff and governors have worked hard to successfully maintain the tremendously high levels of care, guidance and support provided for children. There is a very strong focus on every aspect of the school's pastoral care that ensures that children and their families are extremely well supported. All staff work effectively to ensure that children achieve very well in their learning and develop exceptionally as mature and caring individuals. Children benefit from very supportive relationships with all staff and display a great deal of enthusiasm for learning. Because of the school's exceptionally strong focus on its pastoral care, children contribute extremely effectively to the school and wider community. This is demonstrated well through their readiness, from the very youngest age, to be involved in looking after the school and their environment. They participate enthusiastically in school campaigns, successfully lobbying for a zebra crossing, as well as caring for their learning environment as they look after the gardens and tidy up daily.

Children's achievement is excellent because the school adapts its extremely well-enriched curriculum particularly well, to ensure that every individual's needs are met and all children fulfil their potential. This, along with outstanding teaching, enables children to make excellent progress from their starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage to when they leave to join primary school. All staff know the children's abilities extremely well. This is because of the highly effective checks regularly made on their progress and the considerable skill with which the school adapts and targets the well-focused support it gives individual children. Adults are skilled at promoting children's learning through extremely good quality interventions as they play. They talk to the children about their learning and discuss their next steps regularly. As a result, children have a very good understanding of what they are learning and how to get better.

While achievement is high, the whole staff work together extremely effectively, supported particularly well by the governing body, constantly looking for ways to improve children's attainment and personal development further. Consequently, they are leading the school's drive to raise attendance. Currently at above average levels, the school is working with families where their children's attendance is not good to improve the situation, but acknowledges that there is further work to be done. This constant striving to reflect on outstanding practice and still look for ways to improve, together with leaders' accurate self-evaluation, shows the school has an excellent capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance by:

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- ensuring that persistent absence is eradicated by working directly with specific families to reduce levels of absence for a very small number of children
- promoting the importance of good attendance to all children, parents and carers and maintaining this as a high priority across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children 1

Throughout the school children achieve extremely well in their personal, social and emotional development. Their behaviour is exemplary, when both working with an adult or playing independently, and they show considerable support for one another regardless of age, gender or ethnicity. Children have exceptional moral and social skills, and their spiritual and cultural awareness is excellent. They are extremely considerate of each other, valuing and celebrating each other's differences. This helps to make the school very safe and welcoming. The persistent absence of a few children continues to be an area for improvement. However, children's considerable enjoyment in learning, ability to work really well together as a team, take responsibility for their own learning and demonstrate considerable independence are key factors in their extremely strong development of workplace skills. Their understanding of how to stay safe and lead a healthy lifestyle is excellent. This is demonstrated particularly well by the enthusiasm and knowledge children show as they make very good use of the extensive outdoor learning environment to exercise and enjoy their healthy snacks daily. Children in the Lunch Club, as well as during each session, talk confidently about the healthy choices they make in what they eat and the benefits provided.

Children also achieve extremely well academically. They are clear about their learning and frequently talk with confidence about this, sharing their ideas willingly. During a group session on number, children were keen to talk to each other as they considered the size of a satsuma compared to fruit. They confidently discussed the different ways they could count a pile of fruit and then independently checked to make sure they were right. Their enthusiasm was fuelled by the knowledge that they would soon be able to taste the fruit at the end of the session. Attainment by the time children leave to join primary school is consistently above average in all areas of learning. Over time, children, including those at the early stages of learning to speak English as additional language, make outstanding progress from starting points that are below expected levels as they enter the school. The school ensures different groups and individuals, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are very well targeted, enabling them to learn very effectively. Consequently, all children make the same excellent progress.

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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]	1
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**

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

How effective is the provision?

Children's tremendous keenness to learn is due in a large part to the exceptionally wide and varied curriculum and consistently high quality teaching. The learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is outstanding. Children freely move between the two as they take ownership of their own learning, keen to explore and investigate all that is on offer. The school is promoting and encouraging the children to take ownership of their learning very effectively by ensuring they are actively involved in planning, leading and reflecting on their learning each day. Since the last inspection the school has been successful in ensuring children are clear about the value of the activities they choose and how these help their learning. The extremely creative links planned between subjects help to stimulate and foster children's considerable interest, and provide further opportunities to challenge and stretch their learning. As part of the very effective promotion of other cultures, children listened with great concentration to a favourite story, Handa's Surprise. They took on different roles as they re-enacted the story, learnt new fruits and animals as well as discussing the moral of the story. The children then tasted fruits new to them with enthusiasm, discussing their texture and taste at snack time. Opportunities for developing all areas of learning were provided from this one simple starting point. This approach is exceedingly successful and valued extremely highly by children, parents and carers alike. All staff play their part in delivering this rich, stimulating and engaging curriculum. Some

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of the key features of the outstanding teaching seen are the very good relationships adults have with children, the considerable subject knowledge of the highly trained staff, the particularly effective questioning adults use to extend and challenge children's learning, and the exceptionally effective way all adults make and use assessments to ensure all children achieve extremely well. Basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are very effectively developed. Boys and girls alike are fully engaged because the school works extremely hard to ensure they make the same progress. Boys who had previously developed less quickly than girls in their creative development were targeted particularly well and subsequently achieved very well when they immersed themselves in a captivating practical activity. They collected wood, built camps and explored their surroundings with other nursery school children as part of the highly successful Buddying Project.

Children's welfare and personal, social and health needs are catered for tremendously well because the school works exceptionally closely with parents and carers as well as outside agencies where needed. Key workers build up an extremely close relationship with children and their families, regularly sharing children's progress as well as being there to support when needed. This really is a school where 'every child matters' and staff go the extra mile to make a difference.

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 headteacher, supported exceptionally well by other leaders, provides a clear vision for how the school can move forward. There is a tremendously positive spirit and a real team atmosphere of 'can do'. As part of the school's extremely effective development planning, leaders at all levels are positively encouraged to take on responsibilities. They are highly involved in analysing the school's results and checking teaching to see where it is most effective in order to share good practice and identify where improvements are needed. As a result, all leaders have an exceptionally clear understanding of the school's overall strengths and weaknesses. Since the last inspection, the governing body has become increasingly involved in this process, effectively developing its own efficiency as part of the leadership team. Considerable efforts are made by the school to involve parents and carers in every aspect of the school's work. These extremely strong links are another of the contributory factors to the school's outstanding success. The expertise of leaders and staff is shared with other schools to help improve their effectiveness.

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All staff play their part in ensuring that safeguarding procedures are good, and increasingly rigorous checks are being developed to ensure exemplary practice is maintained across all areas. The school's promotion of equality and diversity is excellent. Staff ensure that there is no discrimination between groups so that all children have opportunities to flourish individually and achieve exceptionally well. Leaders have been particularly effective in promoting community cohesion at school and local levels, developing close contact with other nursery schools within the United Kingdom as well as establishing links with other cultures, ensuring that children can also engage well with others from different countries and backgrounds.

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 embedding ambition and driving improvement	**1**
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	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	**2**
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

The vast majority of parental questionnaires were positive and most of the written comments expressed considerable satisfaction with the school. They commended the caring attitude of the school, the quality of teaching, the leadership and management and how much their children enjoy school. Typical comments included 'an amazing environment', 'the school is excellent at communicating with parents', 'a very well managed school that I cannot find fault with at all' and 'I have been very impressed with the way the staff have helped my child settle'.

Only a very few parents and carers reported any concerns with the school. The proportion of parents and carers who agreed that their child is well prepared for the future was lower than other areas. However, this was the question most left blank and while no negative comments were made about this aspect of the school's work, some commented positively, including one who stated 'the teacher went the extra mile to encourage us to attend a meeting about choosing a Reception place'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Northfleet 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 84 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	80	10	19	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	78	11	20	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	35	65	17	31	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	65	15	28	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	74	12	22	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	70	13	24	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	69	17	31	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)	29	54	15	28	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	67	14	26	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	61	16	30	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	65	15	28	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	39	72	14	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	80	9	17	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	**Outstanding**	**Good**	**Satisfactory**	**Inadequate**
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see **www.ofsted.gov.uk**). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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:	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. ■ 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.

23 October 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Northfleet Nursery School, Gravesend, DA11 9JS

Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work when we visited. We were pleased to hear how much you enjoy coming to school and that your teachers plan such a lot of interesting things for you to do. You get on extremely well with one another and your behaviour around school is first rate. You have an excellent understanding of how to be safe and lead a healthy lifestyle. We agree that there are lots of interesting visitors to your school and activities to get involved in. We understand why you think the adults are very good at helping to make you feel really safe and cared for.

Your school is outstanding. The curriculum planned for you meets your needs extremely well. Teachers and other adults are very good at helping you to make excellent progress in your work. The leaders in your school run it particularly well. They know just what needs to be done to make it even better.

In order to help make your school become even better we have asked the adults at your school to work on one thing:

- to work with your families to make sure you miss as little of your learning as possible.

You can help by coming to school regularly and continuing to respect each other's values, both in this school and in later life. Thank you for helping us with our work.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Marshall

Lead Inspector

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