

Lark Hill Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106016
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	377339
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2012
Lead inspector	Anna Dawson

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	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bryan Lees
Headteacher	Joanne O'Raw
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2009
School address	Northgate Road Edgeley Stockport SK3 9PH
Telephone number	0161 480 0867
Fax number	0161 429 9254
Email address	headteacher@larkhill-nur.stockport.sch.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

Inspection team

Anna Dawson

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector spent six hours observing ten sessions led by three teachers and five early years practitioners, and four shorter observations of children's learning were made. Meetings were held with the members of the governing body, staff and a small number of parents and carers. Although there were no formal meetings with children, opportunities were taken to talk to the children and listen to them talking to staff during their sessions in school. Observations were made of the school's work, the children's records of achievement, photographic evidence and documentation relating to the children's attainment, the school's provision, leadership and safeguarding. The inspector analysed 27 questionnaires from parents and carers and others completed by the staff. The inspector also took into account responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized nursery which offers part-time provision with an option of extra sessions for full time. The majority of children come from the immediate area. Nearly all of the children are White British. There are 8% of children from Asian, Chinese and Polish backgrounds who speak English as an additional language. Sixteen per cent of children are disabled or have special educational needs. The school has achieved the local authority's Healthy School Status.

The nursery shares a site with Lark Hill Primary School and a children's centre. The school and the children's centre are inspected separately, and reports can be found on the Ofsted website.

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	1
Achievement of children	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of children	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. The staff provide excellent support and challenging and stimulating activities for each and every child. Consequently, all children achieve extremely well and are very well prepared to enter full-time education. Without exception, parents and carers hold positive views of the nursery. In the words of one parent, 'This is a lovely nursery which meets the needs and interests of the children'.
- Children, whatever their starting points or abilities make rapid progress in their language, communication, mathematical and social skills to achieve exceptionally well. Their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are excellent. Children's skills on entry to the nursery are below those expected for their age. After just one year, most children leave with levels of attainment that are expected or above those typically achieved by four-year-olds, except in ICT where children achieve much better than most others.
- Relationships and children's behaviour are excellent. The nursery has a happy family ethos. The children feel extremely safe and secure. They clearly enjoy learning and rapidly become confident, independent and creative learners. The attendance of most children, although not statutory, is good.
- The quality of teaching is first rate, particularly in promoting the children's independence, thinking skills and problem-solving skills. The skilful questioning and interventions by the staff rapidly extend children's learning as they investigate and explore. The curriculum for indoor and outdoor learning as children follow their interests is extremely good.
- Leadership and management are of the highest quality and promote outstanding teaching. The excellent curriculum provision motivates the children to follow their interests. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. However, as noted by the senior staff, the system

for recording children's achievement is not presented as well as it could be in a concise and easily accessible format.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the system for gathering data so that it is presented in a more accessible format.

Main Report

Achievement of children

All parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire believe that their children make at least good progress. The inspection evidence supports this view but shows that progress is even better. The children achieve exceptionally well from their starting points, which are below those typically expected for their age. On entry, children of varying attainments are placed into small groups under the care of a 'key worker' who leads a daily 'group time' activity. Essential learning skills, such as speaking and listening, social, mathematical and ICT skills, are the focus of the 'group time' sessions where individual learning is promoted. For example, some older children greatly enjoyed using a touch-screen computer to create a story. They independently selected the tools and icons to create a setting and placed characters of a dog and a dragon within it. Sensitive and skilled questioning from the teacher prompted the children to relate an imaginative and exciting story in a correct sequence from the scenes they created.

The staff quickly identify those children who are disabled and may need additional help in learning and they provide daily intensive support with excellent support from outside agencies and specialist staff. Children speaking English as an additional language have exceptionally good bilingual help. All the groups of children are, consequently, making similar progress and achieving equally well from their starting points. The staff analyse trends and individual attainments of children frequently and narrow any gaps in learning. For example, the staff have raised the boys' attainment in writing to that of the girls. Calculation in mathematics is a present focus for improvement and is successfully helping to raise children's attainment. Consequently, by the time children leave, their skills are broadly in line with or above those usually expected of most other children nationally in all areas of learning. Children's skills in ICT are a strength as children work at levels above those usually expected of this age.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is outstanding. The skilled and dedicated staff hold high expectations and work together as a dedicated team to promote the learning and development of each child. Because they constantly review children's progress together, they know the children's strengths and weaknesses very well. The staff are extremely skilled in questioning and intervening at the optimum learning point to prompt thinking and problem solving during activities. Time is given for children to

consider and organise their thoughts before answering fully. This is a major contributor to children's rapid achievement. For instance, a group of children were very effectively challenged to solve a mathematical problem. They received a letter from their super hero flying dog 'Supervaky'. They were asked to place five toy dogs in order of size and feed them varying quantities of dog biscuits, giving the largest dog the most. The teacher capitalised on their learning extremely well by extending their vocabulary and understanding during discussion of 'more than' and 'less than'. She praised the children for their 'good thinking' as they solved the problem. The outstanding curriculum is reflected in the use of resources such as the use of puppets and super heroes particularly to interest boys and motivate them to achieve. All staff develop children's knowledge of early reading and writing skills very well as part of each session. For instance, children listen to the sounds of rhymes and identify the rhythm of musical instruments, use ICT programs, touch-screen computers and video recorders or identify the initial sounds and letters of their toys.

Outdoor play promotes physical development exceptionally well as children climb, pedal wheeled toys, dig in the sand, grow plants and investigate and record sightings of minibeasts. Children become independent and creative learners as they choose their resources in an exciting learning environment. This makes a significant contribution to the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is outstanding. Without exception, parents and carers praise the high quality of the teaching. The inspection agrees with parents' and carers' comments, such as, 'The staff are brilliant'.

Behaviour and safety of children

There is an excited buzz of activity as children come through the door into this welcoming environment. Children enjoy their activities greatly. For example, when children experimented with mixing colours from powder paint to make a picture, one child commented to a friend, 'It's always magical; it's all the colours of the rainbow'. The children have learned exceptionally well how to behave and consider others. They move around the nursery sensibly and use tools and equipment carefully so they do not cause any accidents. When they finish what they are doing, they tidy up and clean their resources, leaving them in good order for others to enjoy.

Relationships are excellent and children behave exceptionally well. Parents and carers are unanimous in their view that behaviour is excellent, and some praise the staff for improving their children's self-esteem and confidence. All know and follow the school rules. There are no incidents of racism or bullying of any kind. If there are any squabbles or concerns then issues are discussed and quickly resolved. The school's vision of, 'a caring community of happy learners' is evident as children celebrate a range of cultures, respect and help one another and contribute to charity. Children learn extremely well how to stay safe outside school by practising how to cross the road. Children have very good hygiene habits, washing their hands before eating and after activities, understanding that it is important to, 'keep germs away'. They enjoy healthy snacks and lunches, drink water or milk and know that fruit is good for them. The school promotes regular attendance and punctuality very well. The vast majority of children have good attendance and arrive on time. Lateness and absence are monitored and followed up with parents and carers.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides exceptionally clear direction and, with the nursery teacher and the staff, leads the strong drive for improvement. The governing body, led by a knowledgeable and experienced Chair of the Governing Body, acts extremely well in its role as a 'critical friend' and is very supportive. The procedures to keep children safe are robust. All safeguarding requirements are met. The rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures successfully lead to continuous improvement. Because the staff are so knowledgeable and keep up to date and provide training for other practitioners, they ensure that the provision is best early years practice. The school priorities for improvement are discussed and agreed with the governing body, staff, parents and carers. The records of children's progress clearly demonstrate children's outstanding achievement. However, they are kept in several places in a variety of forms. There is no concise overview of the achievements of different individuals or groups over time which is easily accessible.

Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are fundamental to the school's work. For example, strategies have proved successful in ensuring that all children achieve equally well in writing and aspects of mathematics. There has been strong improvement since the last inspection, particularly in children's understanding and use of ICT, which was identified for improvement. As the school frequently and accurately evaluates its development and takes action to improve there is very good capacity to improve still further.

Curriculum provision is exceptionally good. The rich learning environment and a wide range of visits and visitors, expand children's knowledge and understanding. The school holds family nights, to celebrate together, for example, the food and art of different cultures. These experiences make a significant contribution to children's excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

There is an excellent partnership with parents and carers and other agencies, particularly to meet the needs of those who are disabled or who have special educational needs or are at the very early stages of speaking English as an additional language. The school strives to meet the needs of its community. For example, the 'Little Larky' club and 'stay and play' sessions are enabling some parents and carers to take up employment and to prepare their children for entry to the nursery. The information parents and carers receive puts them in a very good position to be partners to help their children to learn. Parents and carers particularly appreciate the video that they are given of their child's time in the nursery. One parent, reflecting the sentiments of others, commented: 'If my child were the only one in the nursery, I would still sing the praises of the staff for the support and the dedicated time they spend helping the children learn, develop and explore. The fact they manage to do this for all of them, to me, is phenomenal.'

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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 child's 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.
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 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.
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.
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.



15 March 2012

Dear Children

Inspection of Lark Hill Nursery School, Stockport, SK3 9PH

Thank you very much indeed for your friendly welcome when I came to visit you. I really enjoyed my time talking with you all and looking at all the exciting things you do. I was especially impressed by how well you use the touch-screen computers and video recorders. I now understand why you all love coming to nursery. It is an outstanding school. This means that your headteacher and key workers work really hard together so that you have a wonderful time and do your best.

All your key workers know what you like doing and what you are good at. They are very good at asking the right questions to help you work things out and to solve problems but also step in to give you some help when you need it. Your beautiful 'Records of Achievement' show me how proud you and your parents and carers are of all the wonderful things you have done. I can see how you all achieve extremely well from when you first started. I have asked the teachers to try to find a better way of showing how much progress you each make in your learning so that this can be seen more clearly.

You make an excellent start to your learning journey. I hope that you continue to enjoy school. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Anna Dawson
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.