

Crook Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113984
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	357461
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Linda Buller

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	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ann Tomlinson
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Ward
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2008
School address	Croft Avenue Crook County Durham DL15 8QG
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons taught by one teacher and two teaching assistants. Inspectors held meetings with governors and staff and also spoke to children, parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at data about children's progress and attainment, records of children's learning journeys, the school's planning documents, policies, procedures and the questionnaires completed by 26 parents and carers.

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

- The quality of children's learning and progress to determine the effectiveness of recent changes in the way in which the curriculum is planned and delivered.
- How well the school adapts and tracks children's curriculum experience to determine how effectively the school promotes equality of opportunity.
- The extent to which leaders and managers have sustained previously identified outstanding overall effectiveness.

Information about the school

The school is similar in size to most other nurseries. Most children come from White British backgrounds, with a small proportion from other heritages. Almost 50% of children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Children generally enter the school in the term following their third birthday and are able to stay in the nursery for a maximum of five terms. The school received Healthy Schools status in September 2009.

The school is currently undergoing a period of transition. The current headteacher was due to retire in September 2010 but as a result of a delay in the appointment of a new headteacher has continued to lead and manage the school on a part-time basis. A new headteacher will take up post in January 2011.

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. The key to the school's continued success is the drive and ambition of all staff to provide the best possible start to education for every child, whatever their ability or background. Excellent team work and a willingness to embrace change are significant strengths of the school's outstanding provision. All staff are fully involved in constantly reappraising what works well and how they can develop practice still further. Consequently, children thoroughly enjoy their time in the Nursery and their achievement remains outstanding.

The care given to children is outstanding. The system of allocating each child a key worker is highly successful. In partnerships with parents and carers the individual interests and needs of each child are quickly identified and excellent relationships established. From the moment they arrive, children demonstrate confidence that they are safe and secure and know who to go to if they have any questions or concerns. This feeling of security helps children to develop self-confidence, to try new activities and develop independence. This contributes strongly to their outstanding progress and prepares them exceptionally well for moving into their next school.

The totally inclusive environment and the new innovative way of planning activities, based entirely around children's interests, thoroughly engage all children. Accurate assessments and focused observations of what children know, understand and can do, enable staff to carefully identify the next steps in learning for each individual child. Staff, who are highly skilled in providing challenges for children of different levels of capability, ensure that these are fully integrated and embedded into the curriculum indoors and out.

Insightful self-evaluation has enabled the school to maintain and build upon the outstanding outcomes for children identified at the time of the last inspection, demonstrating the school's outstanding capacity for further improvement. The knowledge and expertise of staff and governors has been critical to the success of the improvements made. The school has recognised that, in order to continue to improve, formal systems to evaluate the work of the school, including how the information gained from tracking children's progress is analysed, need to take place with greater regularity and rigour.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to ensure that outstanding provision results in outstanding outcomes for children by:
 - increasing the rigour by which leaders and managers analyse the information gained from tracking children's progress to regularly review the impact of changes to provision

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- formalising the procedures by which governors monitor how well the school discharges its statutory responsibilities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children's achievement is outstanding. Their enjoyment of school is evident in their good attendance and beaming faces as they experience the vast range of activities on offer. When they join the school, children's skills vary but, for most, are below or well below those expected, particularly in their speech and language skills. Children make rapid progress particularly in gaining knowledge and understanding of the world, developing creativity and in the basic skills and personal qualities needed for future success. Children make excellent use of their active imagination to make up stories to act out, happily involving their classmates and willingly explaining to adults their thoughts and ideas. They are able to think critically and suggest improvements to their learning. Children with a range of additional physical and learning needs respond well to targeted intervention to overcome barriers such as speech delay and, as a result, they make progress in step with others.

Children behave exceptionally well because they are fully absorbed in what they do and benefit from skilful intervention by staff. They like running and climbing and do so with an excellent understanding of how to calculate risk in order to keep themselves safe. Children fully understand the importance of health and hygiene. For example, they willingly try the fruit and milk on offer at snack time and can explain why they need to wash their hands when they have been playing outside. Children's wonder in learning, how they make choices and their understanding of how they are similar to, or different from others, reflects their impressive spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. During the inspection they demonstrated a maturity beyond their years, when, following a sensitive explanation by staff, they sensibly observed the two minutes silence for Remembrance Day.

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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?

An excellent understanding of how young children learn ensures that the school continues to provide outstanding provision for all. The very skilful way that adults model language and engage children in conversations very successfully promotes children's understanding and use of new words. For example, one child was very proud to explain to others that there were lots of, 'different ingredients' to make special cakes. During an outdoor activity involving colour mixing, adults marvelled at the children's discoveries and encouraged them to describe what they could see and to extend their play into developing early writing skills with their paint brushes.

The fun and exciting curriculum is expertly developed in response to children's interests. In this way children are motivated to learn. There is a strong emphasis on helping children to develop the skills they will need to succeed in the future. Staff quickly identify any potential barriers to learning and develop excellent partnerships with other agencies as they strive to provide children with the support they need to overcome their difficulties. A prime example is the partnership with speech and language specialists in order to diagnose and surmount children's significant communication difficulties. This is proving very successful and enables far more children to reach at least the expected levels in this area of their learning by the time they leave the Nursery. An impressively comprehensive induction programme, which begins with visits to children in their homes, ensures that

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parents, carers and children receive the support they need to allay any worries and to help children to settle well.

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?

Leaders and managers at all levels share a strong commitment to providing the best experiences and equality of opportunity for all children. The school challenges stereotyping well, tackles discrimination and is highly inclusive. Accurate self-evaluation leads to modifications of the curriculum, teaching and learning, so that outstanding provision continues to result in outstanding outcomes for children. Staff are aware that, particularly during this period of transition, the rigour of monitoring would benefit from regular analysis of the rate of children's progress. Staff work in very close partnership with parents and carers. The school's warmth and openness reaches out to engage parents who would otherwise be reluctant to come into a school. This has a significant benefit to their children's development. Excellent links with other organisations enrich the school's own work. For instance, partnerships with the music service provide children with regular opportunities to enjoy singing, the development of rhythm and experience of playing musical instruments.

The high quality support provided by the governing body to the school is clear. Regular visits to the school and very good relationships with staff, parents and carers ensure that governors know the school extremely well. They effectively use their knowledge of the school to take decisive well-timed actions to maintain high quality provision. Nevertheless, this is not yet fully supported with formal procedures to regularly and rigorously check how well the school are meeting their statutory duties. For example, the school follows all recommended good practice for safeguarding children. All the required training is undertaken by staff and children are very effectively helped to understanding how they can contribute to keeping themselves safe. Very secure daily practice, however, outstrips formal recording procedures, which still lack a few details that prevent this element of leadership and management from being outstanding overall. The school promotes community cohesion to great effect. An effective audit has provided the school with a deep understanding of the nature of the community which it serves. This has resulted in careful planning across all areas of learning, which in turn have been thoroughly evaluated. As a result the school operates as highly cohesive community where children get along and develop a very good understanding of faiths, cultures and background different from their own.

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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

Just under half of all parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. An overwhelming majority are highly supportive of the school. Several positive comments were written praising the school. One typical comment from a parent was, 'For a three year old to wake up and ask to go to school speaks realms. I think Crook Nursery is outstanding in every respect.' Parents and carers wholeheartedly agree that the school keeps their children safe and that their children make enough progress due to high quality teaching.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Crook 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 inspector received 26 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 55 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	87	3	10	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	87	4	13	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	22	71	8	26	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	71	8	26	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	77	6	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	81	5	16	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	65	10	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)	19	61	8	26	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	65	11	35	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	71	8	26	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	71	9	29	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	77	7	23	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	84	4	13	1	3	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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:	<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.



16 November 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Crook Nursery School, Crook DL15 8QG

Thank you for welcoming me to your Nursery during my recent visit and for sharing with me all the wonderful activities which help you learn so well.

Your nursery is outstanding. I loved seeing how much you enjoy playing with your friends and how excellently you behave. The adults look after you very well and help you to quickly learn to do lots of new things. The Nursery helps you to get off to a great start in your learning so that when you move on to big school you can continue to do very well.

Even though your school is outstanding, your headteacher and the other adults want it to get even better. I have asked them to make sure that as they change some of the ways they help you to learn they keep a careful check, to make sure you all continue to do as well as you can.

Thank you once more for helping me to find out about your Nursery.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller

Lead inspector

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