

Parklands Nursery School

Spinney Hill Road, Northampton, NN3 6DW

Inspection dates 11–12 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher’s strong leadership and the high quality teaching evident throughout the school have led to outstanding achievement for all children.
- The vision and drive of the headteacher has enthused all staff over a long period of time. Teachers share a united sense of purpose and their morale is very high.
- Leaders and managers are continually making improvements. Their good partnership working with other schools has helped maintain the excellent practice seen in previous inspections.
- Governors are fully involved in all aspects of school’s life and make sure its excellent work continues. They work closely with leaders to ensure that the quality of teaching and children’s achievement are outstanding.
- Teachers base their planning on a precise understanding of children’s needs and interests. Staff are skilled in extending children’s learning by using questioning and discussion very effectively to develop their understanding, even while they are at play.
- An exceptionally warm, caring and safe environment is provided by all staff.
- Teachers are skilled in providing children with purposeful learning activities that encourage them to explore new experiences and investigate new things every day.
- Children like learning and really enjoy their time in the Nursery. They feel completely safe settle quickly into the day-to-day routines. Their behaviour is excellent because they learn to respect and consider the needs of others.
- Children maintain high levels of concentration and perseverance, both inside and out of doors in the exceptionally well-resourced garden.
- All children make excellent gains in their learning. Most are reaching, and many are exceeding, age-related expectations by the time they leave, especially in speaking and listening, and in physical and creative development.
- Parents are unanimously supportive of the work of the Nursery. They really appreciate how well staff know and understand their children.
- Children are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The school’s highly effective transition arrangements allow them to visit their new school more than once if they have any anxieties.
- Day-to- day assessment of children’s learning is outstanding. Staff have made an excellent start in the way they set targets for improvement in children’s ‘Learning Journeys’. However, these ‘next steps’ are not always fully incorporated into adults’ plans for the following day’s activities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector looked at the children's learning in the indoor and outdoor play areas together with the headteacher. She also spent six hours observing children, including sessions where children were led by a key worker or teacher and where they were learning independently, both indoors and out. The inspector observed the children eating lunch and tidying up.
- Discussions were held with children, the headteacher, the senior teacher, and members of staff. The inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. She also met the Chair of the Governing Body and vice chair, and two other governors.
- The inspector evaluated a range of school documentation. These included the documents relating to safeguarding, the school's improvement plan, the document that records the school's view of its performance, minutes of meetings of the governing body, plans for learning, children's learning journals, displays and information about the children's progress and attainment.
- The inspector held a meeting with several parents at the start of the school day and considered the results of a survey of parent views that the school had completed. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire to generate results. The inspector also received and considered questionnaires from seven members of staff.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Parklands is a smaller than average-sized Nursery school.
- Most children attend part-time. There are 10 full-time places.
- Children join the Nursery at three points during each year, at the start of the term after their third birthday.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs is above that found nationally.
- The large majority of children are from a White British Heritage. A small minority of children are from minority ethnic groups.
- Approximately a fifth of the children speak English as an additional language.
- A children's centre is located on the same site as the Nursery and shares the same outdoor learning area. The management of the children's centre has recently been transferred from the headteacher to a charity provider. The children's centre was not part of this inspection.
- The headteacher is the lead officer for the Northamptonshire Nursery Schools Partnership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make even better use of the targets set for improvement in the children's learning journeys in adults' day-to-day planning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The long-serving headteacher and her dedicated and competent team have a high level of commitment to the children, their families and the wider community. This has enabled leaders to cope very well with a number of recent changes, such as the transfer of the management of the Children's Centre to the voluntary sector.
- All leaders and staff with responsibilities have together created a rich learning environment where all children learn and play together exceptionally well. Leaders and governors work extremely well together to make sure that teaching and achievement are consistently outstanding and that children's behaviour is exceptionally well managed.
- The headteacher continually seeks ways of improving the school and making the children's experience even better. Leaders frequently ensure, through rigorous checking, that the quality of teaching is extremely high. Staff who have responsibility for leading specific aspects of the Nursery's work are completely clear about their individual responsibilities for achieving agreed development priorities, and pursue these energetically.
- Leaders make sure that children benefit from well-planned activities which cover all the required areas of learning. They also ensure that children learn about life in modern Britain and that they are respectful and tolerant of others. Children develop a good understanding of different faiths and ethnic groups. During the inspection, for example, the children were enjoying the celebration of the Chinese New Year, through cooking and eating rice and noodles with chopsticks, as well as dressing up in traditional costumes.
- The activities offered to the children are exciting and wide-ranging. Both the indoor and outdoor play areas are used very effectively to provide children with very stimulating learning experiences. All activities are appropriately challenging and give children an excellent grounding in all the skills they need to learn, in order to be ready for the next stage of schooling. No opportunity is missed to reinforce children's reading, writing and number skills, and activities are invariably designed in ways that appeal strongly to the children's imagination.
- The school promotes children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Children from a wide range of backgrounds get on really well together. No child has been prevented from attending the Nursery because of poor behaviour. Relationships between adults and children are excellent so that children thrive in the safe, secure and stimulating atmosphere. Parents spoke warmly of their complete faith and trust in the Nursery.
- Leaders check teachers' performance regularly and give support if it is needed. Staff are well trained and continually develop their skills to ensure that teaching continues to be outstanding. Several staff, for example, have been supported through training to become early years educators.
- Parents who spoke to the inspector could not praise the school enough. They describe the school as a centre of the community. All would recommend the school to others. All members of the governing body, children and adults respect one another. Relationships are extremely good. The wholly positive responses to the staff questionnaire show how much staff enjoy working there.
- The local authority values the work of the school very highly and has encouraged the headteacher to take a leading role in liaising between the local authority and the Northamptonshire Nursery Schools Partnership. In addition to supporting nursery education across the local area, the headteacher also serves with a group of professionals on research projects in conjunction with Anglia Ruskin University.
- The school ensures all safeguarding requirements are met in full and adapts its practice to match that of the best at every opportunity. The school integrates teaching about safety into the curriculum so that children have a robust understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe at all times.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors share the headteacher's passion for making sure that the school meets children's specific needs. They are fully involved in planning the school's direction and in setting challenging targets for

the school and for its leaders. The Governing Body was reconstituted in September 2014. As a result, governors have access to a relevant range of skills, knowledge and expertise, which they use to very good effect.

- Governors visit the school regularly to observe closely the school’s work, consider strengths and contribute to identifying necessary improvements within the available financial budget. They have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching and know how well the children are learning. Minutes of meetings show that they are ready to question leaders to ensure that the school’s work continues to improve.
- Governors oversee and contribute to decisions regarding staff salary awards and are aware of the checks made on the performance of staff members.
- They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met and agreed procedures adhered to.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They arrive eagerly for each session and immediately get involved in activities. Children quickly learn to cooperate and share. They are beginning to work together well in pairs and small groups and are very keen to learn new things. This prepares them extremely well for the next stage of their education.
- Children become engrossed in their activities because they are interesting and imaginative and require thought and careful exploration. As a result, children are ready to practise and persevere when tasks require them to think hard, and take a genuine delight in their own and other children’s successes.
- All children know the routines of the day and they move calmly and confidently from one activity to another. Any minor falling out is dealt with extremely well by staff, who teach children to listen to each other. Children also learn to take turns by using sand timers to help them understand when to hand over to another child. As a result, children are ready to take turns using the equipment and to watch out for others when riding wheeled vehicles.
- Snack times are used extremely well to encourage the children to be independent. Children carefully follow the Nursery’s mealtime routines and always check that there is a space at the table before picking up their utensils, pouring the drink of their choice and deciding what they will eat. When they finish, they clear away their own plates. Children enjoy their responsibilities and understand how their involvement in routines and jobs helps to create a smoothly running day.

Safety

- The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Leaders check that any possible risks have been carefully considered and taken into account when arranging trips or visits, or preparing play equipment.
- Children understand how to assess risk exceptionally well and know how to manage their safety in risky situations; for example, when they were asked to test their bodies by climbing and using playground equipment and to create models using saws, hammers and nails.
- Children are well supervised. They are taught to keep themselves safe when choosing activities so that they do not get into danger. They know the day-to-day routines they are expected to follow, especially in terms of health, hygiene and playing outdoors.
- Leaders and governors make sure that those who work with children are rigorously checked. They make sure that adults are trained and know what to do if there is a medical emergency. Parents and carers, responding to the inspector’s questioning, raised no concerns about their child’s safety.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- There is a wealth of experience among the long-serving staff team who have an excellent knowledge of how to promote the development of children of this age. This means that they can reshape activities very

quickly to extend the children's understanding. Throughout the day, adults interact with, talk to and question the children, and develop their use of language and other aspects of their learning exceptionally well.

- Adults stimulate children's enthusiasm for learning very well. For example, children were 'allowed' to discover a whole range of toy dinosaurs under the tree house and then went on a dinosaur hunt to look for dinosaur bones. They were very excited as they looked for clues indicating where they might find them. This activity sparked many further learning opportunities as they counted the number of bones they had found, plotted them on a map and recounted to others a story about their adventure.
- All staff know the children well and they rigorously check children's progress and achievement. This ensures that all groups do extremely well, and that no child falls behind in his or her learning. There is no evidence of any discrimination whatsoever. At the end of every day, staff share the learning experiences of each child. This means they can tailor the next day's activities to match the children's progress and interests.
- Classrooms and outdoor areas are well maintained and colourful and are used well by adults to provide an exciting and imaginative range of experiences. Consequently, children are highly motivated as they enter the school for each session and they quickly and eagerly get involved in activities without waiting to be told to do so.
- Every opportunity is used to develop early reading, writing and mathematical skills, and these are expertly incorporated into the many activities children encounter. For example, many of the resources and pictures around the learning areas are numbered clearly or have letters and words visible. Adults frequently provide chances for children to count, sort, order, make marks and enjoy books. They provide a range of tools so that children can make a variety of marks.
- Reading is treated as a particularly important activity. The high-quality books chosen for the children stimulate their imagination and develop their vocabulary well. For example, a group of children willingly joined in all the actions and catch phrases in Julia Donaldson's 'A squash and a squeeze'.
- The excellent outdoor area is well designed and used to provide many opportunities for children to develop their physical skills, investigate the environment, grow plants and explore. All activities are richly supported by adults, who engage well with children at all times.
- All the adults play an important part in observing the children and checking their learning. They make very good use of observations and pictures of the children at work and play, and include these in the children's 'learning journey' books. These used to provide a record, shared between school and home, of the progress made by the children. Whilst adults' day-to-day assessment of children's learning is excellent, the targets set for improvement in these 'learning journeys' are not always fully incorporated into adults' planning for the next day's activities.
- Home visits are used very successfully to prepare children for starting at the Nursery. When the time comes for them to leave, the school invites their next teachers to meet the children and takes them to visit their next school. In this way, children are prepared successfully for the move, and go confidently to their next school.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children learn exceptionally well because adults are careful to get the best out of each child through careful questioning and well chosen activities. These, coupled with the exemplary care and attention they receive from each adult, helps them to develop skills in reading and writing and understand simple mathematics. This ensures that they are very well prepared for the next stage of their schooling.
- All children make strong progress from starting points which vary greatly, but which are generally below those typical for their age in language and communication. Staff take every opportunity to engage children in conversation and promote their vocabulary. Currently, children in the Nursery are making excellent progress and, after only one term, have already developed many important skills to make them effective learners.

- Children respond positively to the Nursery’s daily routines and quickly gain the confidence to mix with other children and the adults. The development of personal and social skills is a key priority in the school and children make accelerated progress in these from starting points, which are often low. Children from a minority ethnic heritage and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to other children because their learning needs are equally well supported.
- The most able children achieve well in all areas of their learning. Adults quickly identify who these children are, and make sure that the tasks they are given challenge them to think really hard. Adults encourage the children to begin to explore topics in depth for themselves wherever possible.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs do exceptionally well because the school acts quickly to identify their needs and to set up support for them. Staff are knowledgeable about how to adapt activities to meet their needs. Specialist advice is brought in when necessary and any support is quickly amended as necessary.
- Disadvantaged children make outstanding progress. There is no gap between their achievement and that of the other children at the school.
- Staff work closely with parents to ensure that the skills learned in Nursery are practised at home. An example of this was the treasure hunt, where parents and children set each other a trail of clues, using skills such as counting and using maps, diagrams and photographs. This helped the children understand that learning these skills has a practical purpose.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	121788
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	449523

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Peasland
Headteacher	Sarah Brooking
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2012
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