

Akeley Wood Junior School

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	928/6045
Unique Reference Number (URN)	122138
URN for registered childcare	EY360266
Inspection number	385100
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Mark Mumby HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

The inspection of registered provision was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.^{3, 4}

Information about the school

Akeley Wood Junior School provides education for boys and girls aged from 12 months to 11 years. It includes a nursery which is open for 51 weeks each year. It also provides a breakfast club and after-school care. The school is part of the Akeley Wood School group owned by Cognita Schools Limited. The school is situated at Wicken Park, a rural location approximately six miles west of Milton Keynes. The school opened in 1972 and is registered for 342 pupils. There are currently 251 full-time and 43 part-time pupils on roll. This includes 36 children aged from twelve months to three years of age who attend the nursery. Thirty five children receive government nursery funding for three to four year olds. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in July 2008 and the nursery was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2008.

The school aims, 'to offer nothing less than teaching and learning excellence'.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. The school has improved since it was last inspected. The premises and curriculum have been enhanced. The curriculum is now outstanding and the school meets all of the regulations for registration as an independent school.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. It is exceptionally broad, providing an excellent range of opportunities for pupils. There are detailed policies and syllabuses for English, mathematics, science, geography, history, art, drama, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), food technology, French, music,

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

³ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents.

physical education, religious education and personal and social education including citizenship. Swimming is available off-site for older pupils. Modern foreign language taster courses in Spanish and German are offered to pupils in Year 6. Planning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage covers all of the six required areas of learning. The curriculum is well-informed by national guidance. For example, as a result of the systematic teaching of phonics (early reading skills) to the youngest children, they are showing an increased confidence in reading and spelling. Excellent links have been made between subjects to reinforce learning. For example, drama is used to enrich learning in history and a physical education lesson reinforced learning in science through references to how the body works.

There is an extensive extra-curricular programme with high rates of uptake. Activities include frequent sports fixtures with other schools where competitive sports are played at a good level and with expert guidance from the staff. Good links have been formed with the senior school to further support progression in areas such as music, physical education and modern foreign languages. Excellence is supported very well; one pupil attends the Birmingham Conservatoire and two pupils have appeared in West End musical productions, due to a London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) link for drama.

The needs of the few pupils with special educational needs are met well. Their learning is overseen by the special educational needs coordinator. The additional support that they receive in lessons is of good quality enabling them to make good progress. Parents and carers are provided with a termly breakdown of the curriculum including the good range of visits and calendared events, so that they are well informed of expectations. The breakfast club provides a good social start to the day and after-school care is well-organised.

Teaching and assessment are good and pupils make good progress. Although pupils make more rapid progress in a few lessons, teachers do not always use assessment processes consistently well to challenge pupils and enable them to benefit fully from the excellent curriculum. Lessons are planned well to engage the pupils using a good range of stimulating and interesting resources. For example, pupils in a Year 5 science lesson were enthusiastic when learning about the function of the inner ear by making sound vibrations in models of part of a cochlea. Year 2 children talked enthusiastically about stories that had been read to them because the texts had been well chosen by the teacher. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the engaging tasks and have excellent attitudes to their work. Most lessons move on at a brisk pace and the teachers' high expectations ensure that no learning time is lost. Teachers use a good range of questioning to challenge pupils and explore their understanding. At its best, this questioning is carefully targeted at individuals and enables them to make outstanding progress. However, on occasions, opportunities are missed to question pupils' thinking deeply. Where progress is slower, but still satisfactory, this is often the result of assessment not being used well enough to match work to pupils' individual needs. As a result, some pupils complete simple tasks quickly and are not provided with more challenging work while others have difficulty completing the

same task. Occasionally, there is too much direction from the teacher or an over-reliance on prescriptive worksheets.

Work is marked regularly, providing both praise and often guidance about how to improve. This applies across the ability range. It is most consistent in English, mathematics and science. The emphasis on literacy and writing across the curriculum, along with teaching comprehension skills, is helping to raise standards for older pupils.

The school monitors pupils' progress through teacher assessments, moderated through the use of a range of suitable tests. Assessment is stronger in English than in mathematics and other subjects. A traffic light system is used effectively in English to highlight progress matched against National Curriculum levels. There is good involvement of specialist teachers and coordinators with further oversight by the Director of Studies. Work surveys are undertaken regularly. These reflect a good understanding of standards and progress against National Curriculum levels.

Five pupils were offered county grammar school places last year, although not all accepted them, some preferring to continue to the school's own senior phase.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have a very good work ethic, arriving at lessons with the right equipment and ready to learn. They listen very well. Relationships between teachers and pupils are outstanding. Pupils have a strong sense of independence and high self-esteem. Religious education is broadly Christian-based, but all five principle faiths are studied. Consequently pupils develop a very good understanding of different beliefs and cultures. The school is beginning to have a small but rising ethnicity, with pupils from different backgrounds working and playing together harmoniously.

The house system encourages pupils of different ages to integrate. It is supported by a house-points system where competition is encouraged so as to support excellence. The very extensive curriculum, including extra-curricular provision, and a broad school calendar that supports visitors and school journeys mean that pupils have a very good breadth of engagement. The school fosters a strong moral outlook through its inclusive ethos. The curriculum has breadth and range so as to support outstanding moral and cultural understanding through the opportunities offered. Pupils are strongly engaged in community events and fund-raising.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are considerate and courteous, supporting each other well in lessons and patiently waiting for their turn to use equipment. They respect the school rules and their attendance is high.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils throughout the school is good. The school has all of the required policies in place to ensure that pupils are well cared for and these are all reviewed each year. Almost all of the policies are of

good quality. However, the bullying policy does not make reference to the latest guidance. Nevertheless, the rare incidents of bullying are managed effectively and the pupils say that they feel safe. Provision for first aid is good, although the written policy does not include all of the recommended guidance such as when an ambulance should be called or how to deal with spillages of bodily fluids. Procedures for child protection are very good and all staff including the designated senior member of staff are appropriately trained. Pupils' behaviour is managed very well and pupils are very clear about the school rules and the consequences of breaking them.

The school has prepared a comprehensive range of documentation and guidance to ensure that all staff are fully informed about health and safety procedures. These include clear planning should a critical incident occur and detailed fire safety procedures. The effective implementation of good quality risk assessments ensures that pupils are safe both on and away from the school site. There is adequate supervision at breaktimes.

Pupils have a very good understanding about healthy lifestyles. They speak highly of the nutritious school lunches and abide by rules for only having healthy snacks at breaktimes. They have good opportunities for exercise in the extensive grounds, both during their recreational time and through three physical education lessons each week for pupils from Year 3 upwards. Pupils are confident that there are friends or adults to talk to if they are upset, ensuring good attention to their emotional well-being.

The school has prepared an accessibility plan to improve provision in line with the requirements of the Equality Act, 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has robust procedures in place for the recruitment of staff. All of the required checks are carried out on prospective staff and the proprietors. The systems for recording these checks have been improved since the last inspection and records now fully comply with the regulations.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is housed in extensive old buildings which have been appropriately modernised and refurbished to meet the requirements of the school. Significant work to improve the accommodation has been undertaken since the previous inspection enabling all of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to be accommodated in the main building. Pupils benefit from a good range of specialist facilities including rooms for ICT, science, art, music and drama as well as a new sports hall and extensive grounds which include playing fields and an artificial sports pitch. The buildings and grounds are very well maintained.

Provision of information

Parents and carers are provided with a good range of clear and helpful information through the school's website, prospectus and nursery information guide. The school maintains good links with parents and carers through informative newsletters. Information about pupils' attainment and progress is provided for parents and carers through three clearly written reports each year.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a clearly written complaints procedure which meets requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good as are the provision and outcomes for children aged from 0–3 years and for those aged from 3–5 years. This is the result of good leadership and management. All of the learning and development, and welfare requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Childcare act 2006 are met.

The accommodation for children throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Good quality rooms for each of the different age groups are the result of the school's recent building improvements. They are attractive and of a high decorative standard. The outdoor area for the 3–4 year olds is still being enhanced as it currently lacks large-sized climbing equipment to further develop children's physical skills. Planning for children in all age groups provides a good range of activities across all curriculum areas including a suitable proportion initiated by the children themselves, as well as those led by adults. However, the development of children's speaking and listening skills, and early mark making are not prioritised as well as they could be from an early age. Comprehensive assessment processes are used to monitor each child's learning. The information is used well to prepare individual 'learning journeys' that provided a record of children's learning. High staff ratios and well-organised procedures help children in each age group to settle well and ensure that they are safe and well cared for. Health and hygiene are high priorities, minimising health and safety risks for all children and babies.

As a result of the good provision, babies and children develop good skills, making them socially aware and equipping them well for their future. They enjoy their time at school. For example, inspectors observed high levels of enjoyment when Reception children were playing with their construction site equipment. Older children are developing a good understanding about healthy lifestyles through the current 'keeping healthy' focus. They contribute to the setting by taking responsibility for tidying up and looking after resources.

The staff in the different rooms work well together and have also established good partnerships with other settings. They have established good links with parents and carers. The good quality 'day books' are a particularly effective means of

communication with parents and carers of the 0–3 year olds. The staff team has a shared commitment to improving the setting further. Procedures for risk assessments and safeguarding are robust.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').⁵

The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Make more effective use of assessment processes to ensure that pupils of all abilities are fully challenged in every lesson.
- Develop children's speaking and listening skills more fully in the Early Years Foundation Stage through an increased use of more open questioning.

⁵ www.legislation.gov.uk/uk/si/2010/1997/contents/made.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Nursery and preparatory		
Date school opened	1 January 1972		
Age range of pupils	0–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 151	Girls: 100	Total: 251
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 21	Girls: 22	Total: 43
Number of children aged 0–3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 18	Girls: 18	Total: 36
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,725 – £9,585		
Annual fees (childcare)	£9,384 – £10,710		
Address of school	Wicken Park Wicken Milton Keynes MK19 6DA		
Telephone number	01908 571231		
Email address	Clare.page@akeleywoodschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Clare Page		
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Ltd		

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 September 2011

Dear pupils

Inspection of Akeley Wood Junior School, Milton Keynes, MK19 6DA

Thank you for making my colleagues and me so welcome when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed talking with you and visiting your lessons. Your school has improved since it was last inspected in 2008. You get a good education at Akeley Wood. You now have some better facilities such as the sports hall and the rooms in the main building for the Nursery children. The curriculum has also been improved and is now outstanding, providing you with an excellent range of opportunities in a wide range of different areas including sport, drama and music.

Your behaviour is excellent and so are your attitudes to your work. You all get along well together and are very courteous to visitors. You make good progress in lessons because the teaching is good and the teachers plan activities that get you really interested in your work. However, you could make even better progress at times because occasionally you are set work which is a little bit too easy or too difficult. On occasions some of you could be challenged even more and the teachers' questioning of the youngest children could be improved to further develop their speaking and listening skills.

We spoke with many of you during the inspection and you told us that you feel safe and well cared for. This is because the school has considered your welfare sensibly and put in place good procedures to keep you all safe.

Thank you for making us so welcome and very best wishes for your future education.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
Her Majesty's Inspector