

# Muriel Green Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133975
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	381583
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Goodchild

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.  
The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	0–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	147
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andrew Freeman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Barbara Snijder
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 November 2008
<b>School address</b>	Church Crescent St Albans AL3 5JB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01727 891109
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<b>Email address</b>	admin@murielgreen.herts.sch.uk

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<b>Registered childcare provision</b>	Muriel Green Pre-School
<b>Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision</b>	60
<b>Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision</b>	21 June 2006

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<b>Age group</b>	0–5
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	17–18 November 2011
<b>Inspection number</b>	381583

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited 15 sessions or parts of sessions led by 15 teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body and members of staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including essential policies, the school improvement plan, information about children's progress and attainment data. The inspectors analysed 51 completed questionnaires from parents and carers, as well as questionnaires completed by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- To what extent do teaching and the curriculum meet the needs of all groups of children?
- How well do staff use assessment information in their planning for children under three years of age?
- How comprehensive are the school's arrangements for involving parents and carers, and working with them as active participants in their children's learning?
- Are self-evaluation and monitoring a continuous part of the work of the nursery and pre-school as a means of ensuring quality?

## Information about the school

Muriel Green Nursery School provides part-time places for up to 90 children aged from three to four-and-a-half years of age: there are 87 children currently on roll. The governing body also manages Muriel Green Pre-school which occupies the same building as the nursery and forms part of this inspection. The pre-school provides registered childcare for up to 60 children from three months to five years of age. Those up to the age of three receive childcare in pre-school classes, whereas the care for three to five-year-olds is fully integrated with the nursery so that this age group learn and play alongside children on roll at the nursery. The school is open each weekday (excluding bank and public holidays) from 7.45am to 6.15pm for 50 weeks of the year. The majority of children are of White British heritage; the remainder are from a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. A few children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. At the time of the inspection, the senior member of staff in charge of the childcare provision had recently left and two deputy leaders were managing the pre-school.

Muriel Green Nursery is part of St Alban's Children's Centre, which occupies the upper floor of the same building. The children's centre did not form part of this inspection and is inspected separately.

**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

Muriel Green Nursery is an outstanding school. Most parents and carers who expressed their views are very pleased with the positive start the school provides to their children's learning. One parent expressed this by saying, 'This nursery provides a truly stimulating and secure environment for children to flourish.' Another said, 'Muriel Green is a wonderful nursery with kind, excellent, hardworking staff. They really understand my child and support her very effectively.'

Since the previous inspection, children's attainment at the end of their time in the nursery has been consistently high. This shows that the achievement of three to five-year-olds has been outstanding given their starting points. Inspection findings indicate that achievement remains exceptionally good in the nursery, particularly in personal, social and emotional development, communication and language, and in aspects of mathematical development. Learning and progress in the pre-school are good. This reflects some variation in the quality of provision between the nursery and pre-school, including in the quality of teaching. Although there are occasional examples of outstanding work with babies, the quality of teaching in the pre-school is good whereas teaching in the nursery is often outstanding. Throughout the school, children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress in response to support that is tailored very carefully to their individual needs.

The curriculum provides children with varied and memorable experiences, with a good balance between adult-led activities and those that children select for themselves. The learning environment in the nursery and in the room for babies is vibrant, attractive and well resourced. Although two-year-olds have equal access to the outdoor area, the room used most often for this age group is less stimulating than the rest of the school. Care, guidance and support are outstanding throughout and very careful attention is paid to children's welfare. This contributes to their excellent behaviour and outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The headteacher and governing body share a clear vision for the school and work in close collaboration to drive improvement. This has helped to sustain the high quality found at the previous inspection. The school's positive track record, combined with accurate self-evaluation, indicates that the capacity for further improvement is exceptionally good. The school makes excellent use of links with other organisations and agencies, and engages parents and carers very well. Safeguarding procedures are outstanding and registration requirements for the pre-school are fully met. The headteacher is well supported by members of staff with key responsibilities in the

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smooth running of the school. The leadership of teaching is good, particularly in providing staff with additional training to develop their skills. Senior leaders do not always use monitoring as rigorously as they could, however, to drive continuous improvements in teaching, especially in the pre-school.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the school's existing strengths and increase the amount of teaching that is outstanding, especially in the pre-school, by:
  - increasing the vibrancy and stimulation of the room for two-year-olds
  - undertaking more frequent monitoring of teaching and ensure that identified development points are rigorously acted upon and embedded in daily practice.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children start school with skills which are generally broadly in line with expectations for their age. They make good progress from birth to three years of age in the pre-school. From three to five years in the nursery, they make at least good and often excellent progress. There are no marked differences between the achievement of different groups, including those of minority ethnic heritage or those who speak English as an additional language. By the time children leave the nursery, their attainment is high in communication and language development, personal, social and emotional development and in their ability to reason and solve mathematical problems. Attainment is at least above national expectations in other areas of learning. Children in the nursery benefit from frequent high quality interactions with adults. For example, a small group of children in the construction area became totally absorbed in a discussion with an adult about rectangles, cubes, cuboids and pyramids. They excitedly found bricks to support their ideas about the properties of shapes and remained focused for a significant amount of time. Similarly, in an adult-led activity in the nursery, children made outstanding progress in their understanding of mathematical language through skilled questioning and later learned about the 'fractions' that were formed when paper circles were folded. Such interactions enable children to make continuous gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding in the nursery, though there are some missed opportunities for older and more-able children to develop their early writing skills. There are some high quality interactions between staff and children aged from birth to three which promote their development exceptionally well but these occur less frequently in the pre-school than in the nursery.

Children have highly developed independence skills and quickly acquire a very positive attitude to learning. They enjoy trusting relationships with the staff, and parents and carers confirm that their children feel extremely safe. Children's outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident from their confidence, high self-esteem and the harmonious way they play together. A child expressed this by saying, 'I love the nursery because all my friends are here. I also

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love drawing, sticking, painting and playing outside. I like all my teachers so much.' The younger children too behave exceptionally well and display high levels of concentration and perseverance. Children eagerly take part in a range of physical activities and show that they are becoming knowledgeable about healthy living, as revealed by the child who said, 'Milk is good because it keeps me healthy. It makes my bones and teeth strong.' Children's attendance is above average in the nursery and high in the pre-school.

*These are the grades for children's outcomes*

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Children's attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which children feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Children's behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Children's attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

The school provides both a calm and orderly environment and is a hive of purposeful activity. Staff pay particular attention to supporting children when they join the school, when they move from one room to another or leave at the end of their time in the nursery. Highly effective relationships are quickly established, and parents and carers appreciate how rapidly their children settle. Care, guidance and support are thorough and matched closely to the needs and circumstances of individual children and their families. Support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is exceptionally well planned. Where necessary, it includes specialist techniques such as signing, use of visual timetables, specialist technological resources and additional training for practitioners to enable these children to make as much progress as possible. The school works very closely with health professionals based in the children's centre, including therapists, to provide comprehensive support for children and their families.

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The curriculum provides memorable experiences that promote children's personal development exceptionally well and reflect their interests and experience. Parents and carers praise the 'fun activities' and say that their children are 'full of stories of what they have been doing'. Children enjoy varied activities that provide plenty of opportunity for independent learning and exploration, both indoors and out. A good range of visits, visitors and special events enriches and extends children's learning. From the age of three years onwards, children on the roll of the pre-school are fully integrated with nursery children and this is an exemplary feature of the school's childcare.

Outstanding teaching most often occurs where adults support children in imaginative role play and in activities that involve investigation and exploration. In these instances, and in the best adult-led sessions, staff are extremely skilled in questioning children and challenging them to think deeply and make decisions. This develops their speaking and listening, mathematical thinking, independence, concentration and confidence exceptionally well and it is key to the excellent progress many children make in the nursery. In the pre-school, adults occasionally provide a similar level of focused interaction to support children's learning, especially in their work with babies, but staff's skills are more variable there. Thorough systems are in place to assess children's attainment when they join the nursery, and staff regularly observe and discuss children's progress. The school is, rightly, working to ensure that planning for all sessions in the pre-school includes clear learning objectives based on the next steps in children's learning.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and the governing body are passionate and ambitious for the school's ongoing success, and development planning is sharply focused. Leaders are outward looking in their efforts to develop provision and welcome the chance to embrace innovative practice. Opportunities are exceptionally good for staff to extend their expertise through training, including the development of their leadership skills. All members of the senior team have clearly defined roles for managing aspects of provision and they ensure the smooth running of the school from day to day. Senior leaders provide good support to the headteacher in the implementation of new initiatives, such as the school's current involvement in the trialling of electronic

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learning journals, and in the detailed analysis of performance data. The leadership team and the curriculum committee of the governing body take responsibility for monitoring teaching and learning. Senior leaders, including the two deputies who currently manage the pre-school, provide support to less-experienced colleagues but their monitoring tends to be descriptive rather than rigorously evaluative. In contrast, members of the governing body have produced exceptionally precise and well-judged monitoring reports following time spent in the school looking, for example, at the teaching of literacy and information and communication technology. This reflects the fact that members of the governing body have undertaken a considerable amount of training and joined fact-finding visits to other early years settings.

The school has established outstanding partnerships with outside agencies and other professionals, and it has taken a key role in the setting up of the St Alban's Children's Centre. Its close links with the centre enable it to deliver a wide range of services to families and enhance outcomes for children. There are many exceptionally good aspects to the way the school engages parents and carers, and it is in the process of refining its work in this area. Parents and carers are closely involved through home visits, half-termly workshops and special curriculum events. They are encouraged to share information with staff, for example, through a notice board that celebrates learning at home. However, staff do not always keep parents and carers fully informed about their children's learning.

By the time they move on at the end of their time in the nursery, there is no significant difference between the achievement of different groups of children. The school is strongly inclusive, and tracks thoroughly the progress of individuals and that of different groups to ensure equal opportunities and to avoid any discrimination. The school is a leader in high quality safeguarding practice. It has rigorous procedures for risk assessment and child protection, and provides exceptionally good support for children whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. The school promotes community cohesion well: children from different backgrounds get on very well together and learn in a harmonious environment. Local links, in particular, do much to enrich their development.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>



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<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who returned the questionnaire were mostly positive about all aspects of the school's work. They say that their children enjoy school and they express a high level of confidence in the way the school keeps them safe. A very large majority believe that their children are making enough progress and that the school is led well. They value the way their suggestions are taken into account, though not all feel well informed about their children's progress. A few parents and carers suggest that unacceptable behaviour is not managed effectively. Inspectors investigated both these issues. The school has good and developing methods for communicating with parents and carers and involving them. Senior leaders recognise, rightly, that more could be done to inform parents and carers about their children's learning and various methods are being considered at the moment. The inspection found that children's behaviour is outstanding and there was no evidence to suggest that inappropriate behaviour is not managed effectively.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Muriel Green 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 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 147 number children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	84	8	16	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	82	9	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	49	20	39	5	10	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	59	17	33	3	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	65	12	24	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	59	16	31	4	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	57	18	35	1	2	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)	27	53	15	29	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	59	16	31	3	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	47	18	35	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	47	23	45	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	30	59	17	33	2	4	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	75	10	20	3	6	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



21 November 2011

Dear Children

**Inspection of Muriel Green Nursery School, St Albans, AL3 5JB**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We had a lovely time looking at all the interesting things you do and now I am writing to let you know that we found you go to an outstanding nursery school.

These are the main reasons why we decided that it is outstanding.

- You are very happy at school and play together really well.
- You concentrate for a long time when you are finding out new things and really enjoy learning.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are kind to each other.
- You know how to keep yourselves very safe and healthy.
- The adults take really good care of you and make learning fun.

I have asked the school to make certain things even better and especially to make sure teaching is always as good in the Babies' and Ocean rooms as it is in Rainbow and Sunshine rooms.

You can all help your teachers by working hard and looking after each other.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Goodchild  
Lead inspector

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