

Cherry Trees Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109413
Local Authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	377916
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2011
Reporting inspector	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.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Nursery
Age range of pupils	0–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Woodhead
Headteacher	Michelle Sogga
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2009
School address	Hawkins Road Bedford MK42 9LS
Telephone number	01234 354788
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Email address	cherry@deal.bedfordshire.gov.uk

Registered childcare provision	Cherry Trees Children's Centre
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	62
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	23 March 2009

Age group	0–5
Inspection date(s)	8–9 December 2011
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited 24 sessions or parts of sessions led by three teachers, as well as by nursery nurses and teaching assistants. Meetings were held with nursery and childcare leaders, other members of staff and two representatives of the governing body. Brief informal discussion took place with a few parents and carers when they delivered their children. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including teachers' planning, the school improvement plan, information about children's progress and attainment data. They analysed 73 completed questionnaires from parents and carers, as well as those completed by staff.

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

- How good is children's progress, particularly in the development of early literacy and numeracy skills in the nursery?
- Do planning and assessment in childcare ensure that all age groups are developing as well as they could and having their needs fully met?
- How much progress has the school made in improving provision for creative development and using information and communication technology to stimulate children's learning?
- How well do leaders in the nursery and childcare use monitoring and self-evaluation as a means of driving continuous improvement?

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average nursery school that serves a diverse population. A high proportion of the children are of minority ethnic heritage and are at early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. A high proportion of the children are known to be eligible for free school meals. This year, the parents and carers of 31 children have chosen for them to stay at the school for some or all of their Reception year. A long-serving headteacher retired in December 2010 and her deputy was appointed as acting headteacher from January 2011, before the post was made permanent in June 2011. Alterations in funding led to redundancies and restructuring over the past year; two teachers joined the school in September 2011. The school has the Under Fives Healthy Eating Award, Effective Early Learning, Baby Effective Early Learning ICan and Every Child a Talker (ECAT) accreditation.

Registered childcare for up to 46 children is managed on site by the governing body. This includes daycare for 38 children aged from birth to five years between 8am and 6pm for 49 weeks of the year. Provision is also made for eight children aged between three and eight years from 8am to 9am and from 3.15 pm to 6pm each day. A holiday club is open during school breaks from 8am to 6pm except during the Christmas holidays and the first week of the summer break. Some of the work of Cauldwell Surestart Peter Pan Children's Centre takes place on the school site, but that is not managed by the governing body and so is subject to separate inspection.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Provision in the nursery is of good quality with many examples of exceptional practice. Childcare provision is outstanding. Parents and carers express a high level of satisfaction with the school's work. A number wrote to express their appreciation including one who said, 'Cherry Trees Nursery School has enriched the life of my daughter. She is extremely lucky to be part of such an interesting and exciting place. The staff constantly strive to offer a rich variety of experiences while also catering daily for the children's personal needs and interests'.

All groups of children achieve well and make good progress towards the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Their progress in personal, social and emotional development is outstanding and it is good in creative development, physical development, and knowledge and understanding of the world. Staff are working to develop and refine aspects of provision for children in the Reception year. Their mathematical development has improved as a result of an increased focus in this area so that they are making good progress. Children of all ages in the nursery and childcare make significant progress in developing their communication and language skills. The nursery has identified the development of children's literacy skills as an area for further development. Staff ensure that children develop the skills leading up to early writing exceptionally well. However, opportunities are more limited for them to see and recognise print in the environment and for older children to learn to form letters, to apply their developing knowledge of sounds and letters, and to write.

Teaching and the curriculum are good and improving, and both the nursery and childcare provide outstanding care, guidance and support for children of all ages. There are examples of excellent practice throughout the school and innovation is strong. Staff use assessment information well to plan a wide range of exciting and stimulating activities. Individuals are well known by their key workers and enjoy excellent, trusting relationships with the adults who work with them. Consequently, children are very happy and become readily absorbed in activities. They develop a high level of awareness of healthy living and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Leadership is good and the headteacher is passionate about providing the best possible opportunities for the children. Childcare is managed exceptionally well. Thorough data analysis and careful monitoring inform development planning, and self-evaluation is mostly in line with inspection findings. Partnerships with parents

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and carers and with other organisations are outstanding. The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection and is continuously developing. It has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on existing strengths in teaching and the curriculum to increase children's progress in literacy, by:
 - providing a learning environment that is rich with examples of print and letters of the alphabet
 - increasing opportunities for children to make the transition from mark making to writing for a purpose and forming letters
 - building in more activities that involve children in applying their developing knowledge of sounds and letters in reading and writing
 - recording the systematic progress of children in the Reception year in learning letters and sounds and key words
 - raising teachers' expectations and, where necessary, increasing staff expertise in promoting children's literacy skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**2**

Children enter the nursery with skills that are below national expectations for their age and low in some areas. All groups of children make good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those of minority ethnic heritage and those who are learning to speak English as an additional language. By the time they leave, children's attainment is in line with national expectations for their age and higher in some areas of learning, though lower in literacy.

Children make huge gains in their personal, social and emotional development, particularly in their confidence and independence. They develop a love of learning and often show sheer delight in the experiences provided for them and in their own spontaneous discoveries. They feel safe and behaviour is good. Children readily choose from the varied activities on offer, and are curious and imaginative. They become quickly absorbed and concentrate for extended periods of time. During the inspection, a child showed total focus as she worked independently, rolling out pastry, meticulously cutting out numerous heart shapes then arranging them precisely on a plate. Another applied paint very carefully and thoughtfully, so that each brush stroke contributed to a visually pleasing final effect. In the outdoor area, small groups of children took great care and showed a good awareness of safety as they hammered nails into pieces of wood and attached materials to make 'boats'. Inside, boys in particular became captivated by an art program on the interactive whiteboard and were oblivious to what was going on around them as they created pictures and explored shapes using the touch screen.

Children make good progress in their knowledge of numbers and calculating through playing games and making predictions, and find out about shapes and measures as

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part of their practical everyday activities. A wide range of activities promotes the strengthening of children’s muscular control and their hand-to-eye coordination, and they develop a high level of skill as they work with tools, manipulate dough, sort tiny seeds and leaves and make marks. Their transition from mark-making to forming letters and writing for a purpose is less well developed. They are making satisfactory progress in learning about letters and the sounds that they make. This means that children are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education. However, their excellent attitudes, highly developed social skills and confidence in the face of new experiences instils in them a love of learning that should serve them well in the future.

These are the grades for children’s outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Children’s achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Children’s attainment ¹	3
The quality of children’s learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
Children’s behaviour	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Children’s attendance ¹	2
The extent of children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Provision in the nursery is good and there are many outstanding opportunities throughout that motivate children and capture their imagination. In both childcare and the nursery, teachers plan sessions well and use assessment information carefully to identify the next steps in children’s development. Teachers’ understanding of children’s early learning is evident in a number of exemplary features. In the outdoor area, these include the ‘mud kitchen’, the enclosed sandpit, the music garden, the challenging climbing equipment, the large covered area and the developing Forest School. Inside, children benefit greatly from the kaleidoscope room, which has led to exciting experiments with light and dark, and the introduction of an innovative system of developmental movement play. The nursery has made

¹ 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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good improvements in information and communication technology and is using resources well to promote children’s learning. There are numerous opportunities for children to develop their creativity. In particular, they have access to a wealth of equipment such as building blocks, containers and natural objects that they can use to symbolise characters and situations, solve problems and explore relationships. High-quality childcare includes an outstanding learning environment and resources that stimulate the thinking and the imaginative development of babies and young children.

In both the nursery and childcare, frequent outstanding interactions between adults and individuals or small groups promote children’s communication, personal, social and emotional development and their knowledge and understanding of the world. Daily sessions led by an adult include work on letters and sounds and writing for children in the Reception year. There are not enough opportunities, however, for children to practise forming letters, writing for a purpose and applying their developing knowledge of letters and sounds. While there is some print in the learning environment, this is not as extensive as it should be.

Staff produce detailed observations of children’s learning and highly informative ‘development records’ of their progress. They meet daily to discuss and evaluate children’s learning and use the resulting information to match future activities to the next steps in the development of individuals. An excellent feature is the way children are involved in regular discussion about their learning and encouraged to recount their experiences while looking at the photographs in their ‘development records’. These include references to children’s progress in literacy but recording of their acquisition of key skills and knowledge in this area is not systematic.

A strong focus on promoting children’s well-being is central to the school’s work and to the outstanding care, guidance and support it provides. Bilingual support assistants help children who are learning to speak English to access activities so that they make good progress and feel secure. There are close and productive links between Cherry Trees and the main schools to which children transfer when they leave. Outstanding childcare is underpinned by high-quality support, a close focus on individual needs and extremely sensitive, carefully judged interactions with babies and children. The after-school club provides a warm and caring environment in which children of all ages feel secure and get on very well together. Childcare registration requirements are fully met.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets children’s needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has communicated her vision successfully to the rest of her team and the commitment and motivation of the staff are key features in the school’s effectiveness. There is a strong drive for improvement and even in the face of redundancies and restructuring over the last year, the school has continued to develop well. In both the nursery and childcare, leaders make excellent use of a range of monitoring tools to evaluate aspects of practice, particularly in relation to children’s personal and emotional development. Increasing the amount of data gathered has enabled leaders to track the progress of different groups of children more accurately to ensure that they receive equal opportunities. Children play and develop in an environment where staff value all backgrounds and cultures and discrimination is not tolerated.

Governance is good. The governing body is strongly supportive of the school and closely involved in its strategic development. Its members have a detailed knowledge of the school’s work and provide a good level of challenge to senior leaders. Procedures for safeguarding children are good. Particular strengths include the way the school supports those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, and the way it encourages children to learn to recognise and manage risks for themselves.

Staff work exceptionally well with parents and carers and with other organisations, including the children’s centre. Parents and carers find staff ‘very helpful and supportive’ and appreciate the way they provide information ‘to help with problems in and out of nursery’. They like the fact that they are able to look at their children’s development folders ‘any time’ and describe the staff as ‘very welcoming and approachable’. Home visits, weekly newsletters and workshops on a range of topics involve parents and carers and keep them informed. In childcare, information for parents and carers is carefully tailored to the needs of different age groups.

The school promotes community cohesion well and has an extremely close relationship with its immediate community. In the words of a parent, ‘The school caters for a variety of children from different backgrounds and cultures and does so with respect and warmth’. There are clear plans for the developing national and global links.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

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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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The percentage of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire was well above average for a school of this size. They expressed a high level of satisfaction with the work of the nursery and childcare, and a number provided additional information, mostly writing in very positive terms about various aspects of provision. A very few parents and carers expressed concern about how inappropriate behaviour is dealt with. Inspectors explored this and found that behaviour is good and inappropriate behaviour is usually managed well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Cherry Trees 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 73 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 102 children registered in the nursery and 62 registered in the childcare.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	73	19	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	60	28	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	44	60	29	40	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	60	26	36	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	60	29	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	39	53	32	44	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	62	26	36	1	1	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)	31	42	32	44	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	41	56	28	38	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	45	34	47	4	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	47	37	51	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	52	33	45	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	43	59	29	40	0	0	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 8 April 2011 and 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.

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">■ 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.



12 December 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Cherry Trees Nursery School, Bedford, MK42 9LS

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. We found that you go to a good nursery with many examples of exceptional practice, and the childcare it provides is outstanding.

These are some of the best things about Cherry Trees.

- 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 good and you get on very well with each other.
- You know how to keep yourselves safe and understand a lot about staying healthy.
- The outdoor area includes a lot of very exciting things to do.
- The adults take really good care of you and make learning fun.

The headteacher and other staff are doing a good job and they want to make your school even better. I have asked them to help you to make more progress with your early reading and writing, especially with forming your letters and using what you know about letters and sounds to practise writing more regularly.

I hope you carry on enjoying all the lovely activities in the nursery and the childcare, and enjoying every day there.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Goodchild
Lead inspector

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