

Willow Nursery School

Goldstone Crescent, Dunstable, LU5 4QU

Inspection dates 24–25 October 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Children achieve outstandingly well in all areas of learning. The rapid progress they make in their personal, social and emotional development, spoken language and problem solving is particularly impressive.
- Children benefit from exceptional teaching, which encourages them to think for themselves, investigate and explain.
- Staff use their extensive experience and expertise to provide each child with focused support. A range of well-designed activities and experiences enables all children to make fast progress.
- Stimulating activities are creatively planned, both indoors and outdoors. Children love to choose where, how and what they learn. They concentrate and settle quickly when called together for a story or a music session. They clearly enjoy learning to link sounds and letters and developing their skills in using numbers.
- Children are busy, sociable and enthusiastic. They feel safe in this most welcoming and caring environment.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Children form very good relationships with each other and with the adults who guide their learning. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning. Children of all abilities rapidly develop confidence.
- Leadership and management are highly effective at all levels. The school has sustained the outstanding teaching and achievement of the two previous inspections by focusing relentlessly on how to improve learning for all the children who go to the nursery school.
- The leadership of the school is held in high regard by parents, carers, staff and children.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed sessions taught by the deputy headteacher, two senior practitioners and eight other key workers over five and a half hours, including two group reading sessions. Some of these were observed jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher, teaching staff, support staff and the special needs coordinator. One telephone call was made to a representative of the local authority. The inspector spoke informally with children.
- A wide range of documentation was looked at, including school self-evaluation, assessment data from the monitoring of children's progress, and improvement plans. School policies and performance management documentation and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance, together with the school's safeguarding procedures, were also evaluated.
- The inspector took account of the eight responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the views of several parents and carers who spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- Questionnaires from 12 staff were considered.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized nursery school where children attend on a part-time basis from the term in which their third birthday falls.
- Only a quarter of the children who registered at the school have previously attended a playgroup.
- There is also childcare provision during the school day for 12 children from the age of three.
- The large majority of the children are White British. An increasingly wide range of ethnicities is represented. The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is also increasing but is still well below average.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs is below average. There are currently no children with statements of special educational needs.
- The school does not receive additional funding provided by the government through the pupil premium because nursery children are not funded this way.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- All children make excellent progress from their starting points because of the wide range of opportunities that are provided for them to develop their skills in all areas of learning. Well-planned activities and tasks build confidence, independence and self-esteem, and improve communication skills. During their time in the nursery, children enjoy their learning and achieve so well that, by the time they leave, they are above the stage of learning and development that would be expected for their age.
- Children quickly settle into new routines. They come into school showing great pleasure at seeing friends and staff, eager to know what new things they are going to learn that day. Parents and carers are made to feel welcome. They know they can come in and stay until their children feel confident and settled.
- Children listen very well to instructions and have a very good understanding about the importance of washing hands before they touch food. For example, a small group who were making cheese biscuits needed no reminder to wash their hands before they got started on making the dough. Good discussions were held about cooking at home, rolling dough and how long the biscuits would take to cook.
- Children enjoy listening to stories and looking at pictures in storybooks to make up their own minds about what might happen next. They enjoy choosing books from an excellent selection in the school library, to read both at school or to take home and share with their parents and carers. Children are successfully learning how to link sounds with letters. Early mark-making (a key part of developing early writing skills) is encouraged through the use of sand trays, paintbrushes and pencils, and through recording their names on paintings.
- Many opportunities are provided for children to learn how to count. During the inspection, the children had great fun matching socks and using a timer to see how many pairs they could match in a minute. They enjoyed acting out songs that used numbers and were keen to use games that relied on their ability to recognise number patterns. They loved working out what size shoes they would need to buy in the shoe shop role-play area.
- Children are given plenty of well-planned opportunities to join in activities and develop their understanding and vocabulary through action songs. The song about a dragon under the bed watching the 'telly' caused delight as they learnt new words and wriggled on their tummies pretending to be a dragon eating jelly.
- Children make outstanding progress in their physical development, especially in the outdoor area. They climb confidently, learn to balance, dig in the sand, and develop teamwork and coordination as they cycle together and race around the well laid out track.
- Children who find learning difficult are well supported and their progress is carefully monitored. By the time they leave the nursery, children are exceptionally well prepared for school because the majority of them have made outstanding progress in the three key areas of communication, physical development and personal, social and emotional development.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Staff work across several class bases as a close and highly effective team. They spend a significant amount of time with individual children, which means they are able to move children's learning on at a rapid pace. Valuable discussions take place about the achievements of each individual child and teaching is adjusted to meet each child's developing needs.
- In many of the sessions observed, children made excellent progress because of the well-matched activities and high-quality adult support provided. Staff expertly step in to guide learning either by teaching particular skills or asking thought-provoking questions. Talk between children and adults is of high quality, and it ensures that all children make outstanding progress in their learning and development.
- Staff plan exciting tasks and activities which are closely linked to each child's specific needs and abilities. For example, basic skills sessions are held for those children who are ready for more focused learning of language and number skills. All staff have an excellent understanding of how young children learn, and relationships are very positive. Staff have high expectations and provide all children with a high level of challenge.
- During the inspection, children who were keen to do harder tasks were learning about shapes. The teacher skilfully used toy animals to tell the story of how the animals tried to patch a missing square in their friend's scarf. The children helped each toy animal to use their material shapes of triangle, circle, and rectangle to patch the square in the scarf. Great excitement followed when the scarf was patched with the correct shape. 'Come on', they called to each other as they hurried enthusiastically to make their own shapes on paper with scissors and glue.
- Classrooms are well organised and children know where to locate resources. They are given plenty of freedom to make choices and move between the indoor and outdoor areas. Staff take note of children's ideas and interests and include them in their planning. Staff use all their skills, knowledge and resources to make sure that all children's needs are fully met.
- Children like learning and greatly enjoy their time in nursery. They respond extremely well to the high expectations conveyed by all staff. There are excellent opportunities for children to develop key skills in language and communication. The library area is used well by children and, during the inspection, it was rarely without a child looking at books or reading with an adult.
- The school consistently checks the progress that each child is making. The successes are carefully recorded through photographs and annotations in each child's 'special book'.
- Early identification of individuals' needs and the well-established links with external agencies mean that children who are disabled or who have special educational needs receive the right level of guidance and support they need. This explains their excellent progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The excellent provision both indoors and outdoors and the high-quality adult support results in children's exemplary behaviour. This has a positive impact on their social and emotional skills, as shown by the way they learn and play so well together. Children respond quickly to requests to tidy away toys or come to a group session.
- Children are happy in this welcoming and exciting nursery. They build strong relationships with all staff and enjoy their time in school. They were seen to rush into the classrooms eager to get going on the well-planned activities and tasks. They welcome others to join their play and

willingly share resources.

- Children show high levels of confidence and independence, especially as they move between rooms and the outside area, choosing their own activities. Staff are enthusiastic, supportive and encouraging, and children respect and help one another. There are no recorded incidents of racism or bullying.
- Children understand how to stay healthy; they learn to keep themselves and others safe. They use tools and equipment carefully, understanding that scissors or hammers can be dangerous if not used as they should be.
- Parents and carers have highly positive views of behaviour and safety in the nursery and these are entirely supported by the inspection findings.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher ensures the highest expectations and closest collaboration from the whole staff team. Self-evaluation is accurate and findings from observations of staff directing children's learning are used to set targets for further improvement. There is no complacency at any level.
- Staff share and extend their knowledge, experience and skills in a number of working groups and networks, which helps them to keep up to date with current developments in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The exciting range of planned tasks and activities offers exceptional opportunities for all children and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Learning is planned to take full account of children's stages of development and interests and inspire them to develop independence and creativity. The school is currently revising the learning and development activities they provide to meet the new statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is reflected in the range and breadth of activities and tasks on offer and in how effectively the nursery staff ensure that all groups of children achieve as well as one another. The special educational needs coordinator is involved in the early identification of children with specific needs. All children are known very well and personalised learning is given high priority.
- Staff increase their skills through a wide-ranging programme of training and development. The management of staff performance is rigorous and effective and performance targets are clearly linked to the professional development of staff.
- Partnership with parents and carers is strong. In their response to the online questionnaire, parents and carers overwhelmingly agreed that they would recommend the school to others.
- As a consistently high performing school, minimum support has been required from the local authority. The school is used as a model of good practice across the area it serves. The headteacher provides Early Years advice and support for the authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective. Governors play a significant and active role in all key areas, such as management of the budget. They rigorously ensure that safeguarding

procedures are in place. Governors work with the school to devise improvement plans which stem from accurate self-evaluation. They closely monitor the work of the nursery through regular planned visits. The findings from these visits are discussed and this enables them to ask searching questions about the school's provision and outcomes, and the link between pay and the performance of individual staff.

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	109415
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	401053

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Hassall
Headteacher	Anne Bell
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2010
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