

Weston Way Nursery School

Weston Way, Baldock, SG7 6HD

Inspection dates 25–26 April 2013

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.

- All the outstanding features of the previous inspections have been sustained.
- Children make outstanding progress in all aspects of their development in all areas of learning.
- Teaching is outstanding. All staff plan exciting and challenging experiences which make learning fun.
- Staff use their considerable skills to extend learning through effective questioning and careful listening, successfully capturing the enthusiasm and interests of all children.
- The spectacular woodland garden provides children with a safe, open environment where they learn about the natural world and have opportunities to write, draw and measure.
- Children's behaviour and safety are exemplary. They are able to concentrate for long stretches of time. The strong emphasis on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is demonstrated by the way the children consider and respect others.
- Exemplary leadership from the headteacher and governors has ensured the nursery continues to improve and children's outstanding achievement has been maintained. The management of teaching is very good and all staff work exceptionally well as a team.
- Children and families are warmly welcomed to the school.
- The school is constantly seeking ways to improve and is extending its excellent work with families in making better use of the home-school records of children's achievements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a wide range of activities in the nursery over the two inspection days, including activities children had chosen themselves, others led by adults, and small-group sessions led by staff members.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, the school's own data on children's current progress, checks on the quality of teaching and teachers' planning.
- The inspector spent time with individual children, looking at and talking to them about their 'learning journey' books, which maintain a record of their achievements.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body and several parents. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took into account the views expressed in the 24 completed staff questionnaires, and the 56 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This average-size nursery school provides morning and afternoon sessions, and admits children following their third birthday. Parents and carers can choose from these sessions.
- The school has an extended day care provision known as 'Silver Circles'. Nursery children can access additional hours from this provision to add to their 15-hour entitlement. Evaluating this aspect of the provision was not part of this inspection.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs supported at early years action plus and the proportion supported at early years action is average.
- Most children are from White British backgrounds with a few from a range of minority ethnic families. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- Because of their age, no children are entitled to the pupil premium funding.
- The nursery is situated in an acre and a half of woodland that is designated as an educational nature reserve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the school's excellent partnership with parents by making the learning journals more readily accessible to both parents and children.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The great majority of children start school with skills that are in line with the expectations for their age. Irrespective of their starting points, children from all backgrounds progress at similar, outstanding rates. This includes children supported at early years action and action plus. The very strong emphasis on outdoor learning effectively builds children's self-confidence and contributes to the outstanding progress they make in their personal, social and emotional development. Children learn and play extremely well together, make rapid progress and leave the nursery with skills that are above those expected for their age in all the areas of learning.
- The spectacular woodland environment in the school grounds greatly stimulates children's interest and underpins their excellent engagement in learning. These excellent outdoor learning facilities enable children to develop good levels of physical development. They balance, ride bikes and trikes and in the larger woodland they climb trees, build camps and follow trails.
- There are planned opportunities for children to work in small groups with an adult to promote particular aspects of language, mathematical and social skills development. These group-time sessions are very effectively managed. During the inspection the school was looking after several hatching chicks. This caused endless hours of happiness for the children who delighted in writing stories about the chicks, making 'chick' cards to take home, counting how many had hatched, how long they had been in the nursery and remembering to be especially quiet so as not to frighten them.
- Children enjoy a wide range of opportunities such as mark-making and writing activities. They showed a good awareness of early writing skills as they used a range of resources in and around the nursery. Many children are able to identify their own name, name several letters and the sounds that they make as well as write their own name. Children show very good skills in modelling, painting and collage work. Regular singing of action songs makes learning fun. One child said 'That was great' after they sang the 'train song' with great gusto.
- Children develop a love of books and stories. They thoroughly enjoy choosing books, especially bringing their library card to be stamped with their new choice of book. Staff seize on every opportunity to develop language and widen children's vocabulary. Children also make excellent progress in developing their mathematical skills, again joining in with number rhymes and readily counting how many there are of them in the group.
- Parents and carers are eager to respond to staff guidance about how they can help their children learn at home. Very positive attitudes to learning show that children are extremely well prepared for the future.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching and support staff make an excellent team. They use their considerable expertise in early years practice to provide the children with an excellent start to their education. They plan together carefully, using the outcomes of regular assessments to meet the needs of each child. Staff record these assessments in learning journals and it helps staff to think carefully about what to do next to support children's learning. The school is aware that these home-school link books need to be more readily accessible in order to extend the opportunities for parents and carers to share in their children's learning.

- There is a very good balance of activities planned and led by adults and those chosen by the children themselves, which encourages children to learn through play and become independent. Children are learning to concentrate on an activity for increasing periods of time and to complete a task before moving on to something else. For example, a group of children spent a long time exploring the woods, discovering the different 'mini-beasts' to be found. They proudly made notes of their finds on their sheets. Equally, another group spent considerable time throwing sticks of different sizes, working alongside an adult to record which size worked best.
- Staff also make sure that disabled children, those with special educational needs, children at an early stage of speaking English and others in need of additional help receive close individual support.
- Both inside and outdoors, resources are carefully laid out so that the children look forward to exploring, playing and learning. For example, their attention was captured when a parent brought in a year-old hen for the children to see. This not only widened their knowledge of the world but also promoted much discussion. Staff knew when to hold back so the children could continue learning for themselves. They were equally skilled with questioning to move learning forward.
- Early reading and writing skills develop exceptionally well because of the well-planned teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics). Regular opportunities are available for children to practise these skills and develop confidence to speak, share books and have a go at writing. Excellent use of tablet computers and interactive software inspires children to make marks, to calculate and solve problems.
- All parents who responded to the online questionnaire or spoke to the inspector said that their child is taught very well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children's behaviour is exemplary, a situation maintained since the last inspection. Everyone knows and understands the school's routines. Children have a good understanding of what are the right and the wrong things to do. They listen carefully to the good direction provided by the adults in the nursery and always try their best to show kindness and respect for others.
 - Children are very involved in learning and playing from the moment their session starts. They are very happy, learn to play well together and are confident to try out new things, knowing that there is always someone there to support them.
 - The high quality of care and support for each child demonstrated by staff contributes to the children making excellent progress in their personal and social skills. Parents feel very strongly that the school keeps their children safe.
 - There are excellent, well-established partnerships with experts from education, health and welfare which are skilfully used for children requiring additional support. This means that all children settle very well and enjoy all aspects of school life.
 - Most children attend regularly which reflects a strong partnership between home and school. Parents make sure children arrive on time for the start of sessions. Nursery staff work hard to help families establish good attendance habits. The school has good links with local primary schools and works with them to ensure that children make a successful transition into the
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Reception classes.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's astute knowledge of her school, the dedication of the staff and the strong management by the governing body have enabled the school to maintain the outstanding outcomes noted in both the previous inspections. Leaders at all levels have an outstanding vision for developing the school and have done much to establish its high reputation.
 - Perceptive self-evaluation ensures that specific priorities are identified for improvement. For example, plans are already in place to extend the partnership with parents and carers, enabling them to improve their skills and understand how to help their child at home.
 - The headteacher checks the teaching quality regularly. Information from these observations is used to make sure that staff pay and awards for increased responsibility contribute to expected improvements in children's achievements. The outcomes, coupled with regular appraisals of teachers and teaching assistants, set exacting targets for their performance and staff respond very positively to opportunities to develop their skills further.
 - Very effective implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum promotes excellent levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development amongst children. This is underpinned by the school's commitment to treating everyone equally, regardless of background, culture or ability. This ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve equally successfully.
 - The local authority provides light-touch support for this highly successful school. Early Years Foundation Stage experts help staff to validate the accuracy of the school's assessments. The school works closely with other schools and remains ready to respond whenever its assistance is needed. It is the lead school for active learning outdoors in woodlands.
 - The staff's high morale stems from the fact that they feel part of a friendly, highly effective team committed to improving the life chances of all the children and their families.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors visit regularly and actively seek out information. This not only gives them an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement but enables them to ask searching questions. They make sure that spending decisions have a positive impact on children's progress. Governors are aware of the quality of teaching and take positive decisions to maintain its excellence. Effective systems to check on the performance of staff, including the headteacher, are in place. Governors ensure that staff performance management and pay links well with school priorities. Governors ensure that safeguarding systems meet requirements. All checks on the suitability of staff are thorough. Training to ensure effective support and protection for children is up to date.
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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	117065
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401638

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Marvell
Headteacher	Jane Millett
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2010
Telephone number	01462 892172
Fax number	01462 892120
Email address	admin@westonway.herts.sch.uk

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