

Grasmere Nursery School

Icknield Way, Luton, LU3 2BT

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement requires improvement, particularly as not enough of the children, including the more able, make good progress to reach the levels they are capable of.
- Some parents do not feel effectively informed about how well their child is doing and what their targets for improvement are focused on.
- Teaching requires improvement because the feedback given to children on their work is not always helpful, and the questions staff ask them during learning do not encourage all groups of children to think hard.
- Teachers' planning does not regularly show how each session can be adapted to ensure that all children make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leadership requires improvement due to the fact that some staff in charge of different areas of learning do not appropriately watch over children's achievement.
- Meetings to discuss children's progress are not recorded clearly, so staff do not always know how they should support children who are developing at slower rates.
- Leaders observe the quality of teaching but staff are not encouraged effectively to show leaders that they have met their personal targets. This means that a few staff do not improve their teaching skills efficiently.
- Governors watch over the school thoughtfully, but do not study the progress that different groups of children make in detail.

The school has the following strengths

- Children's personal, social and emotional development is good because staff care for and support them successfully.
- They behave well and concentrate effectively, whether they are working outside or inside.
- They quickly become involved in learning and share equipment fairly because staff guide them thoughtfully.
- Children with resourced places make good progress because staff use their specialised teaching skills successfully to help them.
- The children are encouraged to persevere and work independently to solve problems.
- The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have quickly formed an effective team.
- Parents say their child is happy and safe at the school. The children are learning to make friends successfully.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 sessions or parts of sessions taught by nine teachers or support staff. Four observations were carried out with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, parents and carers, school staff, children and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed children's behaviour and examined the school's safeguarding procedures. The inspector shared some books with a group of children. The inspector looked at children's work in folders and in wall displays.
- The inspector analysed 10 responses to the online Parent View survey and 28 responses from a school survey carried out in July this year. The questionnaires received from 22 staff were also taken into account.
- The inspector observed the work of the school and looked at documentation including teachers' planning, the school development plan, documentation tracking pupils' progress, records of the meetings of the governing body, and arrangements for managing the performance of staff.

Inspection team

Jackie Cousins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This nursery school is larger than average.
- Most pupils are White British. A few are from minority ethnic backgrounds; some of these children are learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. No children are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding because schools only receive this funding for older pupils.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through early action is above average. The proportion supported at early action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school offers childcare from 8am until 6pm during term time.
- The school has specially resourced provision for children with special educational needs. This resource unit caters for up to 16 children who have additional needs including physical disabilities and significant special educational needs. Five children currently attend. All have significant learning difficulties alongside either autistic spectrum disorder or physical disabilities.
- The acting headteacher started at the school in May 2013, and the deputy headteacher took up her post in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the quality of teaching so that it is always good or better by ensuring that:
 - staff use questioning successfully to encourage all children to explain what they are thinking in detail and assess their understanding
 - the feedback staff give to children always tells them clearly what they have done well and how to improve their work
 - staff help to collect evidence that they have met their personal targets.
- Improve achievement in reading, writing and mathematics for all children by making sure that:
 - teachers' planning for sessions shows how activities will be adapted to challenge all groups, especially so that more-able children do better
 - parents know in detail what their child has done well, and what they can do to improve their work.
- Make leadership more effective by ensuring that:
 - staff in charge of each area of learning watch over children's progress carefully
 - governors monitor different groups of children's achievement more effectively
 - records of staff meetings to identify children making slower progress state clearly the strategies that will be used to support them and fill gaps in their knowledge.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **requires improvement**

- Children's achievement, including that of children from minority ethnic groups, is not good and a significant number do not reach the higher levels of knowledge and understanding they are capable of. This is because staff do not always plan sessions that extend children's skills successfully.
- Boys and girls, including those who speak English as an additional language, make steady progress but could be doing better. They join with skills and understanding that are broadly typical, and leave the nursery with attainment that is at the level expected for their age.
- The children develop their speaking and listening skills as a result of staff talking to them suitably. They read and write appropriately because story time led by adults is used to develop their basic skills. For example, children learnt that pictures and letters had meaning when they read a story about hunting for a bear.
- Children learn to count and use numbers securely due to appropriate use of resources. For instance, staff took time to ask children, 'What number comes after three?' and so they learnt to count accurately. The records kept about children who are making slower progress do not detail in full the strategies staff will use to increase each child's skills.
- Children who left the nursery this summer were working above the expected level in personal, social and emotional development because staff expect a lot of them in this area of learning and encourage children to do things for themselves and experiment with resources.
- The children who are disabled or have special educational needs do not make as much progress as they could. This is because one or two children whose development is not in line with their age are not supported totally effectively in activities selected by children.
- Children with resourced places make good progress. These children start at the school with knowledge and understanding that are well below expected levels, but they start to catch up and learn key skills successfully, especially in communication and personal development.
- The children who are known to be eligible for free school meals make steady progress. Some work at expected levels of expertise in speaking, but some are working at lower levels in reading and writing.

The quality of teaching **requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because staff do not do enough to challenge the more-able children. For example, sometimes staff do not give children enough time to answer the questions they ask. This means that children do not regularly learn to explain their thinking in detail. Questions are not always used effectively to check children's understanding and establish what they do not know.
- Staff give children encouraging feedback about what they are doing. However, they do not always explain why children have been successful and so each child is not clear about what they have done well or what they could do to work at a higher level of skill.

- The best teaching uses practical activities to challenge children. For instance, children learnt how to make a ball move faster down a drainpipe as a result of good staff expertise and use of practical activities with water and a wide range of materials.
- Children cooperate successfully and learn to work as a team, for example when they move to music and take it in turns to choose which song they will do the actions for. This is because staff guide children effectively to make 'good choices'.
- The teaching of children with resourced places is good. For example, children learn to concentrate and look carefully at objects because adult sessions are used productively. Staff plan effective sessions and so children develop their key skills. Children learn to work together successfully because staff guide them thoughtfully.
- Assessment is not used effectively. Sometimes staff do not adapt the sessions sufficiently to make sure all children make good progress. Gaps in children's understanding are not always filled systematically because records of children's attainment are not used consistently. For example, learning journals do not record children's targets for improvement in detail or show how they have been met successfully.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Children's behaviour is good and they get on well together. This is because staff are skilful at managing all types of behaviour in a positive way. The school encourages children to think for themselves about whether they are making a 'good choice' or 'bad choice' and rewards them for making 'good choices'. There have been no exclusions or racial or bullying incidents in the last few years. Governors, staff and parents agree that children's behaviour is good.
- Boys and girls are keen to start work as soon as they arrive. They concentrate and have good attitudes to learning as a result of the exciting range of activities the staff set up for them. The children learn to persevere when things get hard and investigate how they would solve a problem because staff guide them successfully.
- Children share equipment fairly and work safely with resources. They respond well to staff. For instance, the children sensibly walked to the lower playground when the fire alarm went off. They quickly assembled in lines so that staff could check they were all there.
- The children learn to handle living things gently and carefully. For instance, they learnt to care for small animals under the thoughtful guidance of staff. During this activity they also learnt about what tortoises need to grow and stay healthy.
- Children attend regularly and they arrive promptly at the start of each session. Leaders make sure that children from all backgrounds are included in all activities, and so they all work well together.
- Bullying is very rare and any name-calling is dealt with efficiently by staff. Children say they feel safe in school. All parents who responded to the Ofsted survey said their child was safe at the school.
- Occasionally, staff do not encourage children enough to reflect on what they have learnt, for example by asking them what was hard and what was easy.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because some staff who are in charge of each area of learning do not watch over children's development and progress with sufficient rigour. Leaders of key areas of learning do not track children's progress consistently well because they have not yet got to grips with the school's new tracking system.
- Staff receive regular training and their work is observed. Staff targets for improving their skills are not always recorded clearly, and they are not involved fully in collecting evidence to show that they have been met quickly and successfully.
- The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher work effectively. They are assisted by supportive staff and so the school is improving. Leaders have considered what needs to be done and have created an appropriate development plan.
- Parents value the staff's friendly approach, and the large outdoor area with an orchard. They say they can talk to staff about their child at the beginning and end of sessions, but would like to know more about what their child is doing well and what he or she could do to improve their work.
- Children enjoy learning whether they are inside or outside because the school has a broad range of equipment and staff use these areas productively. Children have suitable resources to develop their physical skills and to be active. Children are looked after appropriately during sessions, and staff care for them before and after school.
- The leadership for children with resourced places is good. Children are carefully assessed when they arrive. Their levels of skill are monitored thoughtfully to make sure they achieve well. A sensory room and quiet area are used successfully to develop their skills. Staff are skilled in working with children with autistic spectrum disorder or those who have physical disabilities. For example, children learn to recognise symbols and communicate using signs because staff assist them to develop these skills.
- The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well provided for. For instance, resources are used well to help them learn about the fruits found in the nursery orchard and in other parts of the world.
- Safeguarding practices and procedures meet national requirements and the school ensures that the checks carried out on staff are recorded appropriately. All staff have received basic child protection training and are aware of what they need to do if they have a safeguarding concern. Staff have been suitably trained to deal with the medical needs of children who attend the school.
- The local authority supports the school effectively. For example, it has helped the school to strengthen its senior leadership team.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are supportive. They are clear about the school's strengths and areas for development. They monitor the quality of teaching carefully, so they know about whether staff deserve pay rises and promotion. They are also aware those who need extra help to improve their teaching skills. In the past they have not used data effectively to check the progress of different groups of children because the school tracking system did not allow this. The new system means they are now able to do so. The headteacher's performance is monitored regularly. Governors ensure that any safeguarding concerns are thoughtfully and rigorously followed up.

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	109420
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	429616

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	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cathy Mingo
Headteacher	Jan Allen
Date of previous school inspection	9 March 2011
Telephone number	01582 593426
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