

Grasmere Nursery School

Icknield Way Luton, LU3 2BT

Inspection dates 9–10 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- This Nursery school has improved rapidly since the previous inspection as a result of outstanding leadership and a highly committed staff. Everyone is passionate about high quality teaching and actively pursues a relentless drive for the highest academic success.
- Children make exceptional progress and thrive in all aspects of their learning. This is as a result of well-planned, stimulating and challenging activities that respond to children's interests while covering all aspects of the early years curriculum.
- The headteacher and senior leader are visionary leaders who are uncompromising in their drive to improve outcomes for the children.
- Governors fulfil their roles and responsibilities. The governing body is developing its effectiveness with good guidance from the local authority.
- Teaching over time is outstanding. This is evident in children's excellent attitudes to their learning, an exemplary learning environment and children's outcomes.
- There is a fully inclusive ethos that treats every child as an individual and supports them to feel valued and important. All children learn to communicate through sign language to ensure that everyone is included in friendship groups.
- Systematic tracking of each child's progress ensures that all make good progress, with personalised support for any who need it. Despite these careful checks, however, some learning journey records do not have enough detail to guide improvement.
- All staff meticulously apply the procedures that keep children safe and content. As a result, parents are confident that their children are well cared for.
- Teachers are passionate about delivering motivating, exhilarating and thought-provoking lessons and activities that develop children's love of learning.
- The use of school pets in all areas of the curriculum promotes a nurturing, caring ethos while giving children a greater understanding of the world.
- Every class fully integrates disabled children and those who have special educational needs and they progress at the same outstanding rate as their peers.
- Children in the specially resourced provision make outstanding progress. They are able to work alongside their mainstream peers, accessing all areas of the curriculum, and develop an obvious love of learning.
- Parents are resoundingly positive about the relationships they have with the staff. They describe the school as a really special place that allows their children to flourish.
- Children are able to reflect upon and talk about the way they behave. Many families have adopted the school's behaviour approach of good and bad choices in their homes.
- Children freely access the orchard and woodland area throughout the year, exploring, investigating and discovering. They are encouraged to take calculated risks, such as climbing trees.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning activities for three- and four-year-olds, including for disabled children and those who have special educational needs, both inside and outside. This enabled them to gather evidence about different aspects of teaching and learning. Observations of children accessing the specially resourced provision were part of all observations as these children are fully integrated with their mainstream peers.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leader, school business manager, the Chair and other members of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team considered 39 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View and met with parents at the start of the day and during an informal drop-in session.
- The lead inspector considered the 30 responses to the staff questionnaire provided by Ofsted.
- The team of inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school’s own self-evaluation, action plans, records of children’s attainment and progress and policies and procedures.
- Systems for keeping children safe were checked; these included logs, records and risk assessments.
- Inspectors visited the before- and after-school provision on several occasions to evaluate its quality.

Inspection team

Deborah Pargeter, Lead inspector

Seconded Inspector

Carol Worthington

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average Nursery school teaching children aged between three and five years old. The current roll has three- and four-year-olds.
- The school brings together a baby and toddler unit, Nursery school, a specialist resource unit for profound and complex needs, and a children's centre on the same site. This inspection report refers to the Nursery provision including the resourced unit.
- The school day is divided into two sessions, each of three hours. Many children remain for the whole day and access the wrap-around care at the start and end of the day and during lunchtime.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for disabled children and those with special educational needs. This resource unit caters for up to 16 children who have additional needs including significant learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder, sensory impairment and physical disabilities. Fourteen children currently attend. These children are fully integrated into the Nursery classes. Places allocated in the resourced provision are not reliant on children having an education, health and care plan or statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of children with disabilities or special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. No children are eligible for the pupil premium funding because schools only receive this funding for older pupils.
- Approximately half of the children are White British. The remaining children are from a broad variety of multi-ethnic groups. A quarter of children are learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The headteacher took up her post in January 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the detailed tracking of children's progress by ensuring that observations and comments in the learning journey files provide more detail about children's next steps in their learning.
- Secure the recent good practice in the governing body, particularly in the way governors manage the performance of teaching staff.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and senior leader are exemplary in their drive to improve the provision at Grasmere Nursery. They have tackled and resolved many significant issues since taking up their posts. The headteacher is relentless in her pursuit of excellence.
- There is a fully inclusive ethos that enables all children, whatever their specific needs, to thrive and to make outstanding progress. Staff know all children's needs, likes and interests and tailor the curriculum to meet these. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make exceptional progress and are fully integrated in the mainstream provision, but receive the additional support needed to allow them to learn at their level.
- The enriched curriculum provides all children with opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding inside and outside, including the large orchard and woodland area. Very strong communication and language development results in children regularly commenting at a level that is not usual for their age. For example, one child independently explained that a tortoise has a hard shell to protect it from predators, while another child explained that the blue whale was the biggest creature on earth and an amoeba was the smallest.
- The specially resourced provision is exceptionally well led by the senior leader. She rigorously tracks the progress of all children individually and ensures that all support provided has a direct impact on their learning. The setting teaches innovative lessons, in addition to the mainstream curriculum, that fully match the children's needs and interests.
- Leaders' efforts are concentrated on ensuring that all children receive the best quality teaching. There is an ethos of professional improvement focused upon staff members' areas of interest. The values curriculum and forest school are a result of staff, encouraged by the headteacher, bringing these ideas to the Nursery school and being supported in carrying them out.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding are extremely robust. Systems to ensure the safe arrival and departure of children at the Nursery school are rigorous. Staff ensure children's safety through accurate risk assessments. All staff are highly trained in many aspects of health, safety and child protection.
- The concept of shared leadership is reasonably new to the school. Although in its infancy, teachers are effectively leading subjects because they have a clear understanding of the actions required to improve provision. They accurately monitor the impact of any changes on children's outcomes. The senior leader leads mathematics and special educational needs outstandingly well and shares her practice with her colleagues.
- Arrangements for children joining and leaving the Nursery school are particularly strong. Both children and their parents settle very quickly and receive additional support throughout this period. Children leaving the Nursery school to enter primary school are exceptionally well prepared for the next phase in their education.
- Leaders are intolerant of any form of discrimination and actively foster strong and positive relations with children, parents and the broader community. The value of equality exudes throughout the school; this was commented on by parents and observed by inspectors.
- Parents are resounding in their praise for the staff, the quality of teaching and the well-being of their children. They describe the school as a place where children flourish, are safe and make exceptional progress.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well catered for. They take turns, share ideas and value their peers. During the inspection, children greeted each other in Spanish, use sign language and sing in an Akan African language. Boys and girls studied Degas ballet pictures and danced like ballet dancers, while wearing tutus they had made.

- Children are developing an understanding of fundamental British values and recently held a democratic vote to decide on the names of the new ducks. The behaviour management policy encourages children to reflect on good and bad choices and many families have adopted this within their homes. During the 'people who help us' topic children gained an understanding of the law and the emergency services.
- The local authority has been active in supporting the school through a period of turbulence and strengthening school improvement through regular support visits and staff development. The local authority has supported significant improvements in governance, staff well-being and safeguarding.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors have an accurate and open view of the school and use a variety of reliable sources to gather and evaluate information. They hold the headteacher to account and challenge her on the impact of her actions to improve achievement, the quality of teaching and overall outcomes for children.
 - Governors have been reflective about their strengths and areas for improvement. They have used a recent audit to create an effective action plan and the impact of the detailed actions is reviewed at each governing body meeting. Consequently, governance is improving rapidly and is beginning to support the overall improvements at the school.
 - Governors ensure that arrangements for the performance management of staff are implemented, and have newly established systems and procedures to review pay linked to performance. They know what is being done to reward good teaching and tackle any underperformance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The majority of children have social skills beyond those usually found in children of their age. They work together, take turns and can talk about their behaviour eloquently. As a result, children play happily together and explore their environment collaboratively.
- Attendance at Grasmere is good. This is a result of children really enjoying school life and the school providing flexible child care before and after school.
- Children take pride in their school and the environment is well cared for. They learn to nurture wildlife, the school pets and take care of the school grounds. This ethos is evident throughout the school day, modelled by adults and secured as the norm for children.
- Children are fully inclusive of each other and no one treats anyone else differently, despite some children in the specially resourced provision having physical disabilities and more complex needs. There are no recorded incidents of bullying or racial discrimination; parents confirm this.
- Parents and children are warmly welcomed at the start and end of each session. Parents frequently stay to talk to teachers about their child's progress and are encouraged to stay with their child until they are settled.
- Parents feel supported and described the staff actions as 'going the extra mile'. All parents feel that their child's well-being is an integral part of the ethos of the school and know that any concerns they express are promptly addressed.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Parents are encouraged into the classrooms to deliver and collect their child, but only once they have passed stringent security checks.
- Senior leaders ensure that all areas of the school site are secure and safe. They achieve this with daily checks, robust risk assessments and a comprehensive automatic locking system. The headteacher reviews safety arrangements frequently and has commissioned regular audits by the local authority.
- Staff safeguarding training exceeds national requirements and includes specific issues linked to the region and the age of the children. The proportion of staff and governors trained in safer recruitment,

whistleblowing, keeping safe on social media, safeguarding, radicalisation and child protection, is significantly above that required for a nursery school.

- Children take calculated risks, such as climbing trees, thus enabling them to develop independence, improve their physical development and gain a greater understanding of the world.
- Senior leaders are tenacious in pursuing additional provision for more vulnerable families. They regularly access external professionals and support to ensure that families have the necessary facilities to parent their children effectively.
- The additional needs of children in the specially resourced provision are reviewed regularly. The Nursery school adapts the provision, as required, to ensure they have access to the curriculum and site safely.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Staff have an excellent knowledge of the curriculum and the needs of children in the Nursery. These underpin the planning of rich and varied activities that allow all children to flourish. Children quickly develop a love of learning.
- Inspiring approaches to teaching enable children in the specially resourced provision to access the curriculum fully. Lessons, such as the 'bucket' lessons (a very small group daily lesson revealing multi-sensory items in a bucket and drawing in flour on black paper) and the multi-sensory room sessions create a sense of awe and wonder. These support outstanding progress for children who are challenged in many aspects of their learning.
- All teaching staff effectively use a variety of communication techniques to allow all children to participate. Children within the mainstream provision are learning to use sign language, thus ensuring that children with additional needs are fully included in friendship and social groups.
- There are no significant gaps in progress between boys and girls in English or mathematics because reading, writing and mathematical activities are available in every classroom, both inside and out, and activities are based around a broad variety of interests. Boys and girls filled the pool for the ducklings, and independently used estimation and comparative mathematical language while they were doing so.
- Teachers cover all aspects of the early years curriculum exceptionally well through a broad variety of learning, including forest school, music, stories, snack time and whole-class sessions. Dynamic and inspirational approaches encourage all children to participate, even when they are initially reluctant. A lesson smearing paint on tables to music allowed all children to develop their fine and gross motor skills, letter shapes and sounds, counting and responses to different artistic stimuli.
- The most-able children make accelerated progress. They attend additional small-group sessions where they are encouraged to access more advanced areas of the curriculum, such as using the sounds that letters represent to build up simple words, thus enabling them to start reading and writing sooner.
- Teachers create an attractive and aesthetically pleasing environment that enables all children to explore, think critically and be creative through stimulating activities.
- Teachers keep a learning journey to show the range of children's achievements. In some of these, children's next steps in learning and short observations of their work require more information to allow the reader to determine fully how the child is getting on.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children start in the Nursery with skills and experiences that are broadly typical for their age. By the time they leave for primary school, children have made outstanding progress and most have skills, knowledge and understanding that are better than those seen in children entering Reception. They are very well

prepared for primary school.

- All groups of children make better than average progress. Individual and group attainment and progress are reviewed regularly and staff work collaboratively to ensure that their assessment judgements are accurate. These judgements are then reviewed with the senior leadership team before being agreed with other local schools.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make exceptional progress. This is because staff recognise their specific needs and plan their learning opportunities to meet them.
- The progress of children accessing the specially resourced provision is informally reviewed weekly and very closely tracked each half term. This enables senior leaders to ensure any additional support has a direct impact on the child's development. These children make exceptional progress.
- Boys and girls make similar levels of progress and the average difference between genders is only a few months. Both groups make slowest progress in writing, but this still remains above national expectations for their age.
- Children from different ethnic backgrounds, and those who are in the early stages of learning English, progress at the same rapid rate as their peers. Their weakest areas for attainment are literacy based and they receive additional support to accelerate their progress.
- The most-able children achieve well in all areas of their learning. Staff quickly identify these children and adequately challenge them through whole-group and individual activities. Children who are starting to read have individual sessions with the headteacher to support their literacy development further.
- Literacy and mathematics based skills have been a key focus for the Nursery school and children have received additional support to develop these skills. An action research project and targeted learning have resulted in children's progress that is substantially better than their peers locally and nationally.

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	464388

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	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cathy Mingo
Headteacher	Joy Luxford
Date of previous school inspection	26 September 2013
Telephone number	01582 593426
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