

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Lydalls Nursery School

Lydalls Road, Didcot, Oxfordshire OX11 7HX

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Inspection date:

7 June 2022

## **Outcome**

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Lydalls Nursery provides all children with the strong start they need to their education. Parents and carers are delighted that the school is so inclusive and focuses on the individual needs of their children. Families receive a very warm welcome and are actively encouraged to help with their child's development. Strong relationships and building trust underpin the nursery's clear approach to working in partnership with families.

Children love attending this setting and are eager to learn. The staff work very well as a team to enable children to feel safe, secure and valued. Children who are new settle quickly into the clear routines and receive excellent care.

Happy children flourish here because dedicated staff equip children with the language and attributes to help them succeed. Children are encouraged constantly, and the enthusiasm of staff is infectious.

The nursery is packed full of varied, interesting and exciting activities. These help children develop their skills and keep learning exciting. Staff pay close attention to children's own interests but also introduce them to new opportunities as well. Staff take great care to get to know each individual thoroughly to make sure that all children can be fully included in what this vibrant nursery has to offer.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders are clear about what the school aims to achieve before children leave for other settings. Over time, they have developed a close-knit team of adults who are passionate about making these early school days the best they can be. Rightly, leaders prioritise children's language and personal, social and emotional development (PSED) because of the needs of the children and the gaps many possess on entry.

The curriculum is ambitious and well considered. However, the curriculum does not consistently help children build all the knowledge they need to help them achieve exceptionally. This is because it is not clear to adults what all children need to know through play activity and the best order to learn it in. This also means that informal assessments and observations are not always focused on checking children's understanding or if they need to revisit learning before moving on. As a result, not all children build their knowledge gradually and securely as they could.

Staff teach the curriculum using a consistent set of effective approaches. This is because there is a team of staff who understand child development very well. Children recognise the language for learning that is used by adults throughout the school. This helps with choosing tasks and transitioning between activities.

Promotion of communication and language is a strength of this school. Staff make every word count, ensuring that children hear a wide and relevant vocabulary. Children are encouraged and praised for repeating and enriching their speaking into increasingly full sentences. This starts with the language of needs and wants and moves to more conversational and descriptive language. Children who may be unable to use words to communicate are helped to express themselves successfully using Makaton and/or symbols.

Right from the start, experienced staff work closely with families to get an accurate insight into children's needs, interests and strengths. Leaders analyse information precisely, which helps them identify any children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their potential barriers. Children with SEND make strong progress because staff use tailored plans, teach in the small steps they need and support children flexibly.

Staff model the way they want children to behave. They intervene effectively to help children to understand their emotions and deal with any challenges. As children learn how to communicate and control their behaviour, their positive interactions with others increase. Children learn exceptionally well how to get along with others and play nicely.

Children's learning extends beyond the school gates, helping them expand their horizons. For example, leaders have carefully considered the many languages spoken and ensured that the learning environment reflects the cultures of all families. By recording familiar stories in children's first language, opportunities to enjoy and share are taken. For example, all children feel that they belong and are valued. This helps enrich their understanding of the world and people from a range of religions and races they may not have encountered yet.

Governors are completely in tune with the school's priorities. They also challenge leaders on the impact of their work and their decision-making on children's outcomes. Staff workload is manageable because they receive ongoing support and have clear systems in place. This means that staff can focus on working with children without distraction. Staff feel valued and well supported by leaders. Staff are very proud to be part of the team and clearly enjoy working here.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding culture is strong. For example, leaders do not shy away from challenging other agencies and professionals if a child might be at risk. All staff are thoroughly trained to provide appropriate care and medical assistance to all children. Staff receive effective training, which helps them to identify the signs that children and families may need extra support. Information about child protection is recorded in detail and overseen meticulously to ensure that no concerns are missed. Leaders follow up on information, taking the right actions in a timely way. Checks on adults appointed are carried out thoroughly and monitored appropriately.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The planning of the curriculum and training in its delivery is not precise enough. This means that teaching does not always focus on what pupils need to know and remember over time. This sometimes leads to missed learning opportunities. Leaders should ensure that curriculum planning is clear about what pupils need to know and the best order to learn it in. In addition, leaders should ensure that high-quality training supports staff to implement these plans effectively.
- Assessment strategies are not effective enough because they are not focused on what children have learned. Practitioners are not clear about exactly what they want children to know, remember and be able to do from play activities. This means that staff often focus on dispositions, for example teamwork or resilience, without checking the underlying learning intended. Children do not always build and practise using knowledge well enough. Leaders must ensure that adults have clear direction and understand what must be learned to maximise children's early development.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in January 2017.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	122972
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10211283
<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	94
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Michelle Williamson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Phillips
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.lydallsnurseryschool.co.uk">www.lydallsnurseryschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24 and 25 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is organised into two mainstream nursery classes, one for younger children aged two to three, and the other for children aged three and over.
- There is a breakfast club run on site and managed by the school.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors and spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone. An inspector had informal conversations with parents on the morning of the inspection.

- To understand the quality of education provided by the school, the inspection team examined certain aspects of the early years foundation stage curriculum in detail (deep dives). This inspection included deep dives in the prime areas of communication and language and PSED, as well as physical development. To explore these aspects, inspectors spoke with leaders and other adults. Inspectors observed the nursery in action, including watching activities and listening to interactions between adults and children. The team also looked at what children created and produced through their various activities.
- Inspectors also scrutinised the school's arrangements for safeguarding. They explored adults' knowledge and understanding of safeguarding, reviewed important records and checked procedures for vetting the suitability of adults.
- Inspectors took account of parents' responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and parents' written comments.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff to gather their views about the school and took account of staff's responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Gareth Flemington, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Judith O'Hare

Ofsted Inspector

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