

Inspection of an outstanding school: Weston Way Nursery School

Weston Way, Weston Way Nursery School, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6HD

Inspection date: 21 September 2022

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Children are warmly welcomed when they arrive at school every morning. Staff greet each child with wide smiles. Adults are caring and know their children well. Children are happy and safe. Many parents agree with this. One parent who spoke to an inspector said, 'It is wonderful to bring my child into such a lovely and welcoming environment each day.'

Children are very busy at Weston Way. Purposeful and enticing activities encourage children to settle quickly. Children enjoy spending time outside. They explore in the woods or dig in the school garden. They happily work on their own or together with the adults.

Children get on well together. Adults make sure that children know how to play in the setting. They show children how to behave. Adults use quiet voices to reassure children. This helps to make the environment a calm and safe place to be. Children behave well in the nursery.

Leaders know the children well. They ensure that children are ready for their next stages of education. Every child receives the support they need to be successful in their learning.

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

The new headteacher ably leads the school. She is supported well by staff. Since the headteacher's arrival, there has been a sharp focus on development of the curriculum. Together, they have considered the best ways to help children learn. Leaders have placed 'Rainbow Values' at the centre of the curriculum. Adults help children identify achievement of the values through their planned learning experiences. For example, 'Inquisitive Iguana' or 'Community Cat' help to remind children to display these desired attributes.

Leaders have thought about what they want children to know by the time they leave this school. In the most effective planning, children's milestones are 'chunked' into smaller steps to help adults organise activities. Staff have secure knowledge about how children learn and develop, and follow the plans closely. Occasionally, there is not enough focus on the things children should know. This is because the small steps do not make explicit this information to staff. When this is the case, staff make decisions about the curriculum which are not closely aligned to leaders' intent.

Leaders refer to creating a 'home-from-home' environment for the setting. Resources are carefully selected for children to use in their play. Whether inside or out, children use familiar items while investigating or creating. This supports children's independence effectively and promotes their curiosity of the world around them.

The development of children's communication and language skills weaves through the curriculum. Adults take every opportunity to introduce and model key language. For example, visual prompts alongside words helped children to explain growth while in the garden. 'Seed', 'plant', 'light' and 'water' were terms used by all the children.

Daily use of stories and rhymes feature in children's learning. Leaders have carefully selected books to provide children with a mix of familiar fiction and non-fiction texts. Story sessions captivate children's interest and responses. They were keen to explore ideas of space while reading 'How to Catch a Star'. Staff identify initial sounds that appear in children's names. This early introduction to phonics provides children with a good start in learning to read.

Children mostly spend a year in the nursery. Leaders understand that it is important to build positive relationships with parents. Before starting school, leaders meet with parents to build their knowledge of children's needs. Staff swiftly identify any children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff meet regularly to discuss children's individual support plans. Careful monitoring of all children's progress helps to inform planning and ensures effective support for children's needs.

The curriculum includes different experiences to enrich children's wider development. External visitors bring exotic animals to link children's knowledge of different countries. Children learn about different festivals to help their understanding of other cultures. After-school clubs such as 'Creative Chefs' and 'Mindful Me' promote the importance of well-being and keeping healthy.

Staff speak of being part of a family while working at the school. They feel well supported by leaders. Governors have a good knowledge of the school. They check that leaders' actions are helping to improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of care and vigilance at the school. Staff know the children and their families well. Leaders provide regular training so that

staff understand how to protect children and keep them safe. Leaders maintain detailed records of their work with vulnerable children and their families. They ensure that this information is passed on to the child's next school. Leaders are tenacious in finding help for families and preventing concerns from escalating and becoming serious.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Across the curriculum, there are varying degrees of precision regarding the key knowledge that children need to know and remember. As a result, some staff are not always clear about what they need to do to deliver curriculum intentions effectively for all children. Leaders should ensure that all staff understand the key knowledge they need to teach, and focus on this when undertaking activities.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in April 2013.

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.

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

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| Unique reference number | 117065 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10241625 |
| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 5 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 72 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Krista Toal |
| Headteacher | Kelly Nichol |
| Website | www.westonway.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 28 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed to the post in April 2021.
- There is a new chair of governors, who took up the role in September 2022.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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 held meetings with the headteacher, the curriculum leader, members of staff with safeguarding responsibilities, the special educational needs coordinator and the school business manager.
- The lead inspector met with three school governors and had a discussion with a representative of the local authority to discuss their work with the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation relating to the school's work to safeguard pupils. This included records of actions taken relating to concerns about

children's safety. The school's single central record, which includes the recruitment checks made on staff, was also reviewed.

- Inspectors looked at the school's website and a range of school documents, including the school's own evaluation, curriculum plans, and records about behaviour and safeguarding children.
- Inspectors undertook deep dives in: communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; and knowledge of the world. For each deep dive, inspectors visited lessons, looked at a range of children's work and met with teachers and other practitioners.
- Inspectors considered the 23 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 20 responses to Ofsted's free-text facility. Inspectors also spoke to some parents during the inspection. Additionally, inspectors took account of the 16 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Richard Kueh

His Majesty's Inspector

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