

Inspection of an outstanding school: Willow Nursery School

Goldstone Crescent, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 4QU

Inspection date: 21 April 2023

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 at Willow Nursery School are happy and motivated to learn. Strong, supportive relationships help children to feel respected and valued.

Interactions throughout the school provide valuable opportunities for the effective modelling of language. Children learn about the world around them by interacting with their friends and key workers. Children access activities that make the daily language being used more meaningful.

There are very few instances of unkind behaviour or bullying. Children show kindness, share their toys and listen to others most the time.

Children are safe and learn ways to keep healthy and out of harm's way. Children are encouraged to be independent and select their own resources safely. Dressing up as superheroes and uniformed officers generates language about helping, saving and protecting. Children enjoy opportunities to take part in storytelling that helps bring texts alive.

In the main, the curriculum provides opportunities for children to develop language, knowledge and skills so they are prepared for Year 1. However, in some cases for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, the curriculum is not as effective in ensuring that their needs are met.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that has end points linked to the statutory framework for early years. However, the precision and detail of what leaders expect children to know at various points is not clear. This means that staff do not always know what small steps

are needed to achieve these end points and therefore smaller steps are not intentionally taught. While most staff have a secure understanding of how children learn, this contributes towards there being an inconsistency in the delivery of the curriculum. Consequently, some children, particularly those with SEND or who speak English as an additional language, do not achieve as well as they could.

Teachers use assessment regularly to check what children know, but this information is not routinely used well to address gaps in children's knowledge. Staff do not always ensure that teachable moments introduce or reinforce key vocabulary that is specific to children's stage of development.

Children show a love of reading and listening to stories. They show delight in the many books that adults share with them. Older children learn initial sounds. They can relate these to their name and objects around them. Most children speak confidently when talking about the books they are reading.

Leaders and staff have identified very well the needs of children with SEND. Leaders apply for extra support from outside agencies. However, leaders have not trained staff sufficiently so that they are able to adapt the curriculum for these children with confidence. Similarly, leaders do not check to ensure that staff provide for children's needs well enough. Consequently, the quality of the curriculum for children with SEND is variable.

Adults are positive role models and children quickly learn the routines in each area of the school. Children independently access the garden and share equipment with each other. Children show the ability to sustain concentration, follow instructions and usually behave well so that others can learn without disruption.

Leaders recognise and value the diversity within the community. Children are introduced to a range of religious festivals across the year. Children have many opportunities to be still and appreciate the natural world, such as gardening, cooking, forest school and yoga sessions.

Staff appreciate the leaders' concern about staff workload and well-being. Staff are unanimously positive and proud to work in the school.

Governors take a keen interest in the school and carry out their responsibilities well in terms of equality and safeguarding. However, governors have not focused on checking the quality of education to the same extent, as funding and staffing have been prioritised.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have instilled a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school. Staff have been trained to notice any small changes in children's appearance or behaviour that may be a cause for concern. Any concerns are followed up promptly and external support is put in place.

Children are taught about road safety and how to use tools correctly. They have close relationships with their key workers. Children are taught to use signs and symbols, so their needs are clearly understood.

All necessary checks on adults working in school are in place.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not established the specific content and skills they want children at different stages to learn. Consequently, staff do not know exactly what they should teach. This leads to some children, particularly those with SEND and children who speak English as an additional language, not learning what leaders intend. Leaders should refine the curriculum to ensure that all staff know the progression of skills and knowledge children should be taught in all areas of learning, then monitor that it is having the intended impact.
- Leaders have not provided sufficient guidance and training for staff to plan learning activities for children with SEND and children who speak English as an additional language. As a result, staff do not always provide opportunities that meet these children's needs. Leaders must give staff the guidance and training to plan learning opportunities that meet the needs of children with SEND and children who speak English as an additional language. Leaders and those responsible for governance must also check to ensure that staff follow and use leaders' guidance and training so that children, including these groups of children, can learn and achieve well.

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 October 2012.

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

Unique reference number	109415
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10211287
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Hassall
Headteacher	Leigh Davies
Website	www.willownurseryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Willow Nursery School admits children from the term after their second birthday.
- Leaders do 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.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding leader. They met with the deputy headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator. The inspector also spoke with a school improvement partner from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in three subjects: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and expressive arts and design. For each deep dive, the inspector spoke to leaders, visited lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to children and viewed children's work.

- The inspector viewed a range of documents, including governor meeting minutes and safeguarding records.
- The lead inspector met with the chair and representatives of the local governing body.
- The inspectors spoke to parents and carers before and during the school day. They also considered the 24 responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 24 responses submitted via the free-text facility.
- The inspectors took account of the 16 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. The inspector spoke to a range of children throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Isabel Davis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lynne Williams

His Majesty's Inspector

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