

Willow Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109415
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	288363
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey

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 on roll	
School	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Hassall
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Bell
Date of previous school inspection	13 February 2002
School address	Goldstone Crescent Dunstable Bedfordshire LU5 4QU
Telephone number	01582 662600
Fax number	01582 662600

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average size nursery school situated in Dunstable and serving the surrounding catchment area. Children start the nursery with broadly average levels of attainment though a significant number have delayed communication skills. Very few children are entitled to claim free school meals, though a significant minority come from backgrounds of social and economic disadvantage. There are a small number with learning difficulties and disabilities and currently no children have a statement of special educational need. Most children are White British though there are a small minority from other ethnic backgrounds many of whom are in the early stages of learning English. The school has Basic Skills Quality Marks for mathematics, literacy and a British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) Award for information and communication technology (ICT).

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding and highly effective nursery school giving excellent value for money. It was considered to be a good school at the time of the last inspection and it has continued to flourish and develop since then. The school's success arises from highly effective leadership by an outstanding headteacher. She is supported by governors and an able and hardworking staff team who together ensure the needs of children and their families are at the centre of all that they do. Outstanding care and guidance is offered to each individual so that all feel valued in this nurturing but challenging environment where children thrive and become very well rounded individuals. As a result, their achievement is outstanding and they make rapid progress and attain standards which are exceptionally high.

This is certainly a very happy and harmonious school because of outstanding leadership and management. The school is extremely successful in laying the groundwork for developing children's basic skills and their understanding of the world they live in. Personal development is outstanding because children are encouraged to express their ideas and to accept increasing responsibilities. Many grow in confidence beyond their years. This ensures children are equipped exceptionally well for the next stage of their education and the choices they will have to make about their lives. It is no surprise that parents are unanimous in their praise for the school. One parent wrote: 'Since my daughter started at the school she has developed into an independent and confident little person. I am so grateful to the staff for their great work and time they have for the children. Every aspect of Willow is at 110% if not more!'

Excellent teaching and learning arises from teachers who know children very well and carefully plan lessons which take children's learning forward from whatever level they have reached previously. The outstanding curriculum ensures stimulating and enjoyable, structured or play activities are employed which fully involve children in their own learning, bring lessons alive and develop very positive attitudes. Those who find learning difficult, and those who are at the early stages of learning English, get outstanding support so that they also make excellent progress.

The impact of leadership and management is outstanding because rigorous procedures are employed for checking the work of the school, particularly how well children are progressing. There is a shared understanding of the school's performance and a commitment to continuous improvement from all so that, good as the school is, there is no complacency. Leadership has been successfully shared so that curriculum leaders are having a very positive influence on school improvement. The fine detail of their work can be improved further by embedding activities which challenge the more able in all areas of learning so that they match the quality of those already seen in the basic skills curriculum. Governors are very supportive and gaining the confidence to provide a high degree of challenge.

The success the school has had in the past and its determination to do even better means that the capacity for sustained and future improvement is great.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure curriculum leaders embed challenging activities for more able children in all areas of learning so that they match the quality of those already seen in the basic skills curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children achieve outstandingly well. The school has a proven track record of ensuring that children consistently make at least good progress in all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum and in many areas they make exceptionally good progress. Consequently, by the time they leave the nursery, they have overtaken most children of a similar age to achieve exceptionally high standards. Children who are at the early stages of learning English and those who find their learning more difficult are supported extremely well to ensure that they too make similarly good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development is outstanding. Children's happiness and enjoyment is in no doubt. One child volunteered: 'It's brilliant! I love it!' This positive attitude begins from the moment children start at the nursery because freedom to learn is extremely well promoted, as are spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Care is taken to help children think positively about themselves and others, in and beyond school. They learn to share, take turns, to cope with their emotions and develop a good sense of right and wrong. Lunch times are a joy, behaviour is exemplary and conversations flow freely. Children develop a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles because of the emphasis on healthy eating and the focus on physical activity indoors and outdoors. Children feel safe and secure so that early on, they develop independence and the confidence to make safe and healthy choices. This prepares them exceptionally well for their lives in and out of school both now and in the future. The school works hard to ensure that pupils attend well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding and are underpinned by excellent relationships all round. Adults have very high expectations of children so that they are attentive and respond quickly to instructions. Stimulating lessons contribute significantly to the extremely good progress children make. Assessment information is used very effectively to plan work that is closely matched to children's needs. Teachers understand that children learn in different ways and provide tasks which motivate and encourage them all. This includes good use of computer based learning. Children enjoy many opportunities to investigate and solve problems for themselves. They are having so much fun they do not realise that adults' incisive questioning challenges them to really think and work hard. Nursery nurses and teaching assistants have full involvement in planning and assessment across the school and all adults take responsibility for the very effective support for those children who have additional learning needs; as a result these children make excellent progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because great care is taken to provide a beguiling range of activities which stimulate and develop children's learning. Effective assessment allows the

curriculum to be tailored to suit individual children. Activities inspire a sense of awe and wonder and provide exciting, challenging and new ways to learn. All areas of learning are covered well and enriched in many ways. Music, group and story times extend children's vocabulary and their physical skills and promote a real love of learning. 'Yogabugs' sessions improve children's flexibility, concentration and imagination. Good use is made of the local environment and community partners such as trips to the dentist or visits from emergency services. Trips out, particularly to the many and varied places of worship, broaden experiences and provide special and lasting memories. Curriculum activities support learning well, help children discover their talents and develop important personal skills which will help them when they are older.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Standards of care are outstanding because of the great emphasis which is placed on the personal, social and emotional development of each child. Adults get to know children and families very well and are extremely quick to respond to worries. Therefore children separate well from their carers and settle to nursery life quickly. Children who have learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported and do extremely well. The school works well with outside agencies to further enhance the care it provides. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are thorough. Systems for measuring how well children are progressing are extremely rigorous so teachers know exactly what the next stages of learning are and these steps are made very clear to the children so that they know exactly what they should be learning next and how they should go about it.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management have led to the school's proven track record of maintaining high standards whilst continuing to make improvements. The head teacher and her able deputy have ensured that the skills and impact of the hardworking staff team have been carefully nurtured and extended in the interest of professional development and continued school improvement. All leaders play their full part. They could improve their impact further by embedding the same quality of challenging activities for more able children in all areas of learning; something they already ensure in the basic skills curriculum. Teamwork is paramount, as seen for example in the excellent and varied contribution made by nursery nurses and teaching assistants. Excellent systems collect detailed information about how well the school and children are doing. Resources are well focussed and response to changing needs is quick. Supportive governors have a good understanding of the school's work and are now getting to grips with their monitoring role. The excellent condition of the environment and continually improving resources arise from astute planning and an excellent knowledge of how best to promote children's learning. Extended services are offered to the community to further enhance the care and support of children. These include before and after school clubs, a childminder's drop-in, a parent and toddlers group and sessional care.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

22 March 2007

Dear Children

Willow Nursery School, Goldstone Crescent, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 4QU

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your nursery recently. This letter is to tell you what I thought about it.

I think you are very lucky to go to such a wonderful nursery school. I saw you having so much fun and doing lots of exciting things. You are very well behaved and everyone gets on so well together. I saw you all working and playing hard in classes, having lunch together quietly and sensibly and playing and working outside too. Because all the grown ups work very hard and look after you so well you not only do very well with your learning you also become very nice people!

Everyone at the nursery is very keen to make it as good as it can be. So, to make the nursery even better I have asked all those adults, who are leaders, to make sure that those of you who find your learning too or a bit easy, have things to do that will make you think and work harder in all your lessons, similar to the way they already do in literacy and mathematics.

I am sure Mrs Bell and the other staff will continue to work hard to make the nursery an exciting and interesting place for you and you can do your bit by continuing with your excellent behaviour and hard work.

Joanne Harvey AI

Lead Inspector