

Weston Way Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117065
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	290705
Inspection date	15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Alison Pangbourne

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Cesvette
Headteacher	Ms Jane Millett
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2001
School address	Weston Way Baldock Hertfordshire SG7 6HD
Telephone number	01462 892172
Fax number	01462 892120

Age group	3–4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average sized nursery school. Most of the children come from White British families and the others come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A small minority speak English as an additional language. Children come from the town of Baldock and the surrounding villages. About a fifth of the children have learning difficulties or disabilities. When children enter the nursery their attainment varies but overall is broadly typical for children of this age. The nursery is working towards becoming a Children's Centre. It also provides a lunch club, Silver Circles extended care, where children can stay at nursery for an afternoon session as well as the morning, and a summer holiday play scheme. The nursery is celebrating the 65th anniversary of its opening this year. It is situated in an acre and a half of woodland that is designated as an educational nature reserve.

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 nursery school. Parents are extremely positive about it with many having attended it themselves. One wrote, 'I have been delighted with the way my girls have been nurtured. It has been a well spent year for each of them'. The children love it too, rushing to come in to see what exciting activities await them.

Children's personal development is outstanding. They become enthusiastic learners who enjoy nursery very much. The excellent care, support and guidance that they receive help them to work very well independently. Their behaviour is exemplary. The outstanding emphasis on healthy lifestyles and keeping safe means that children know what makes a healthy meal and are keen to compost any leftovers! The children raise funds for an unusually wide range of charities and community projects for such young children, making an excellent contribution to the community.

Children's achievement is excellent. From a broadly average starting point, they easily exceed what is expected on entry to primary school. Many children are well on the way towards what is expected at the end of the reception year. They make such outstanding progress because the quality of teaching is excellent and the stimulating curriculum with its exciting opportunities for outdoor play gives them a flying start. The children say 'We love playing in the woods'. Visits to places of interest and visits from members of the community add to their experiences. Staff know the children extremely well and match activities very closely to their needs. There is a very strong focus on early literacy, numeracy and computer skills. Every opportunity is taken to develop these skills in a practical and enjoyable way.

The excellent leadership and management of the headteacher are fundamental to the nursery's success. She has a very strong commitment to developing her staff and for nurturing their talents. As a result, the recently established senior management team fulfil their management roles with enthusiasm, relishing the opportunity to take a full part in the development of the nursery and supporting the headteacher. Governance is excellent. The headteacher and the governors work very well together. Their main priority is rightly the development towards Children's Centre status. They are pursuing every opportunity to extend and improve the building to create space for this. They make every effort to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all children but the limitations of the building and lack of space mean that not all children can be offered a place at lunch club or attend the Silver Circles extended care. This means that some children miss out on this extra provision and the continuity it provides. The headteacher and the governors have an accurate view of how well the nursery is doing and have a strong commitment to continual improvement. Value for money is excellent and the improvements that have taken place since the previous inspection, and the quest for further improvement, show that the nursery has an outstanding capacity to improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Take every opportunity to extend and improve the building so that the nursery can offer more for the wider community, particularly as it works towards becoming a Children's Centre.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress because the quality of teaching is outstanding and the excellent curriculum encourages them to learn. Evidence of their excellent achievement is seen in the comprehensive records kept by the nursery. These show children's attainment on entry and on exit to primary school. By the time children leave nursery, most of them are already working well within all the early learning goals. This is what might be expected by the end of the first year in primary school. The records show that all children, including those with learning difficulties, those who speak English as an additional language and those who are particularly gifted, all make excellent progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children thoroughly enjoy the nursery and their behaviour is excellent. Attendance is good. Healthy eating is encouraged, with children counting out their raisins and breadsticks at snack time. The children grow their own vegetables and are keen to recycle any waste in the composter. They show very high levels of independence for their age. They are confident to go to the library alone when it is their turn to change their book. They take on plenty of responsibilities, completing the weather chart and tidying up before they move to another activity. The children develop an excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through the stimulating activities, such as learning about their own and other cultures. The very strong focus on literacy, numeracy and computer skills, together with the emphasis on good manners, means that the children have an excellent basis for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

All adults work very closely as a team and the teaching is of a consistently very high quality. Children respond extremely positively to the staff's very high expectations. Relationships are extremely strong and, as a result, the children are willing to try their best. Not a moment is wasted, particularly if there is an opportunity to develop basic skills. As an adult wrote a sentence, she asked, 'What must I remember?' Several children chorused, 'You must put a full stop!' Excellent organisation means that children know the routines and move confidently from room to room. Each child has their own 'key worker' who takes responsibility for their learning. As a result, staff know each child very well and are skilled in giving just the right amount of challenge or assessing when a different activity is needed. Very high quality play, where adults join in to extend learning, contributes very positively to the high standards. Detailed records are maintained showing what children know and can do and the way that adults use their assessments so effectively to match tasks is fundamental to their excellent progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outdoor area is used very effectively to enrich learning. All areas of learning are covered and there are excellent opportunities for adventurous and physical play. The woodland provides ample opportunities for discovery and to wonder at the marvels of nature. The children love

it! Very high quality resources encourage children to develop a wide range of skills and to use their imaginations. Special days, such as Grandparents day, add interest and visitors such as firemen and new babies fascinate the children. Unusually for a nursery school, there are opportunities for football coaching as an extra-curricular activity. Provision for those with learning difficulties, those who speak English as an additional language and for those who have special talents is excellent.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The nursery's very caring ethos means that parents and children feel valued. The nursery works very effectively with parents and carers. Procedures for safeguarding children are robust and staff are well trained in child protection. Children's progress is extremely thoroughly tracked and staff set targets from their analysis of how well children are doing. They also talk to children about what they expect from them during activities. This gives them a good understanding of their own learning. The children are confident to approach staff with their thoughts and ideas because they know that an adult will help them if they have a problem. Links with other schools and agencies are excellent and the nursery ensures that children transfer smoothly to their next school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The excellent leadership shown by the headteacher underpins the school's success. A parent summed it up, writing, 'The headteacher is always very approachable and cares very much for each individual child and caters for all their different needs'. Everything she does is for the benefit of the children and their families. As the school moves towards Children's Centre status she diligently applies for any possible funding to extend the building. Some children who attend nursery in the mornings stay for lunch club and then attend Silver Circles in the afternoon. The headteacher knows that there is insufficient space to offer the lunch club or the Silver Circles extended provision to all children. This particularly affects the children who attend in the afternoon because there is insufficient space to offer them Silver Circles provision in the morning. To compensate she has arranged for extra staff in the afternoons to give the children who attend then extra attention. The headteacher, the senior management team and the governors thoroughly monitor the work of the nursery and all fulfil their management roles very effectively. Governors are very well informed and act as 'critical friends', ensuring that the nursery goes from strength to strength.

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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	1
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	2
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	1
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

16 March 2007

Dear Children

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

I have asked your headteacher to read this to you. I expect you saw me in your lovely nursery recently. Thank you for talking to me and showing me what you were doing. I really enjoyed visiting you. I would like to tell you what I found out.

I thought you were all really good children and you played so nicely together. I liked seeing you having fun in your outdoor area and I agree with you that your woods are lovely. I liked the shapes hanging from the trees! You have some lovely toys to play with. All the grown ups look after you extremely well and help you to learn. Your headteacher makes sure that your nursery gets better and better. Your families know that you go to one of the best nursery schools.

I have asked your headteacher to keep on trying to have an extension built to give you more space. She would like to be able to ask all your families if they would like you to come to lunch club and Silver Circles. There is only room for some of you at the moment.

I hope you carry on enjoying your time at Weston Way Nursery School and do well in your next school.

Best wishes

Alison Pangbourne

Lead Inspector