

Lydalls Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122972
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	292548
Inspection date	18 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Sean O'Toole

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	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Kevin Griffin
Headteacher	Ms Claire White
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2002
School address	Lydalls Road Didcot OX11 7HX
Telephone number	01235 813137
Fax number	01235 814766

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Lydalls draws its children from a wide area and a range of backgrounds, which are mostly socio-economically disadvantaged. A high proportion of children have White British heritage and very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Ten per cent have been identified as having learning difficulties. The school holds several awards including the Inclusion Mark, Health and Safety, Healthy Schools, is recognised for its achievements in teaching children about the wider world and is working towards the International School award.

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 school where every child's needs are met by a dedicated and professional team led by an inspirational headteacher. As one parent wrote, 'I cannot speak highly enough of Lydalls; its facilities, its caring and enthusiastic staff, its ethos.' The school has improved excellently since it was last inspected and no stone has been left unturned in pursuing the highest quality of education and care for the children. It has outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

The staff are ambitious for every child to succeed and, through their excellent teaching, ensure that children make outstanding progress. Most start school with lower levels of skills, knowledge and understanding than normally seen among of children of this age. The challenging curriculum, stimulating environment and emphasis on individual work ensure that achievement is outstanding. By the time they leave the school the children are confident learners who are working at levels in all of the areas of learning that are well in advance of those expected for their age. The school has correctly identified the need to extend children's language skills further so they become more confident in expressing their ideas using imaginative and technical vocabulary. Children with learning difficulties are quickly identified and given high levels of support which enables them to make rapid gains in learning. The staff are also highly skilful in working with those who are new to learning English and through lots of practical work, expert teaching of new words and much encouragement these children participate in all the nursery offers.

Parents comment very favourably about the way the staff encourage independence. One said, 'My child certainly enjoys school and I can see his confidence growing through encouragement and praise from the staff.' A hallmark of the school's success is the way in which children are equipped for the next stage of their education. They are sociable, friendly and highly motivated. They love coming to school and rush in eagerly at the start of sessions, keen to get started. This is because of the way that all are given focused attention and support. As one parent said, 'My son is aware that he is valued and is treated as a significant individual.' Consequently children feel safe and able to explore the challenging opportunities provided. They have an excellent understanding of how to live healthily and relish dinner time and the snack break when they enjoy wholesome food and have a chance to socialise.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Staff are a high performing team who are always looking for ways to improve. Their analysis of data to pinpoint any gaps in children's understanding provides the focus for developments and leaves no room for complacency. The improvements in opportunities for creative development and new resources for outdoor play have added much to the children's enjoyment. Staff rigorously monitor each other's work and willingly adopt new approaches. Governors also play a significant part in keeping a check on how well the school is doing. The delight of parents can be summed up by one who wrote, 'I have found Lydalls to be a fantastically run nursery that puts the care and happiness of the children at the forefront.' Because the children's well-being is their central focus the staff provide challenging and imaginative opportunities which enable children to excel in all aspects of their development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend opportunities for children to use a wider range of imaginative and technical vocabulary to help them to explain their ideas in more detail.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children achieve outstandingly because of the high quality of provision which inspires them to succeed. By the time they leave the school they have made remarkable progress in learning how to learn. Inspection evidence, the school's records, children's work and robust data analysis show that boys and girls achieve equally well. Standards at the end of the nursery are well in advance of those expected for children of this age. They speak and listen confidently although there is room for improvement in extending their vocabulary so that they can explain their work in more detail. Nonetheless, skills in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development are high. Children also have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the world and their creative and physical development are exceptionally good. Those new to learning English make excellent progress. Similarly those with learning difficulties thrive because they have specific targets which pinpoint the next steps in their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They sensitively show concern for others and the natural world. They are keen on recycling and as a result their parents have followed their example. Behaviour is delightful and children say they feel happy and secure. Boys and girls mix well and show respect for and enjoyment of different cultures. They really enjoyed dressing up as dragons to celebrate the Chinese New Year. It is obvious from the way that they settle quickly when coming into the nursery that the children enjoy learning. Attendance is good.

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Children stick at tasks and love to explore and investigate. They know much about healthy living, understand the importance of exercise and enthusiastically join in outdoor activities. They mature very quickly because staff expect much of them and as shown in the excellent way that they collaborate, share and use tools safely for example, in making excellent wooden picture frames. Children express themselves creatively and often take the initiative in learning. These skills and their competence in basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics equip them excellently for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Staff know how young children learn and plan activities that motivate and take account of their differing backgrounds and abilities. The development of early reading and writing receives high priority. Group times instil a sense of wonder as the children listen to stories. Staff make sure that they reinforce the sounds that children need to learn new words through games, songs and rhymes. Staff skilfully assess how well the children have understood new ideas and use the information to plan the next steps in learning. They make sure that everyone is included and valued and this ensures that children have the confidence to tackle challenging tasks. Because work is matched exactly to the children's needs their skills improve rapidly. Children have a thirst for learning because activates stimulate their interest and staff are fully involved in working alongside them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The excellent curriculum is the result of rigorous analysis by the staff of what the children need to learn and their willingness to adapt activities to the specific needs of individuals. As one parent commented, 'I cannot thank or praise the staff enough for the wonderful, professional, kind, caring and stimulating ways they have created an environment in which the children learn.' Thorough planning gives the children an interesting mix of practical and physical activities which contributes to their collaborative and independent skills. Planning is linked to enhancing children's personal, social and emotional development and staff skilfully link the areas of learning. Those with learning difficulties thrive in such an environment. Excellent visits, the use of visitors and special events also enhance learning and help the children to appreciate and contribute to the world around them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The staff care for, nurture and support the children in an exemplary way and also have an excellent system to keep a check on progress and to guide the children on how they might improve. Detailed records and robust analysis of data mean that the staff quickly identify any shortcomings in the children's learning and tackle them. The interests and well-being of the children lie at the heart of the school's ethos. Health and safety have high priority. There are excellent procedures to ensure child protection. All staff have received extensive training in safeguarding children. Staff know the children well and keep good records of their achievement which they share with the parents. The focus on care starts with home visits and the excellent welcome given to parents and their children on starting school. Parents praise staff for their dedication and availability. As one said, 'They are always available to tell me how my child is doing and they know every detail of his development.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher sets high standards and staff respond with enthusiasm because all believe that the interests of the children should be at the heart of all decisions. Accurate self evaluation provides the springboard for further success. The school's plans are detailed. Governors are very supportive and make use of well focused systems to keep a check on the school's work. There is a rigorous system of performance management which links the staff's work to the children's learning. Although the school has been successful for several years no-one rests on their laurels and there is a relentless drive for the children's success. Staff rise to challenges and willingly learn new skills. They work excellently with colleagues from other settings, including the school's day care. Parents feel involved and well informed. The school is in an excellent position to build on its substantial success.

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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	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	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

3 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Lydalls Nursery School, Didcot, OX11 7HX

Thank you for being so helpful when I visited your school. What a great place to learn! I enjoyed watching you at work and when I spoke to you I could see how much you enjoy learning. Along with your mums and dads, I think that you go to an outstanding school.

There are lots of things which make your school so special.

- The staff really care about you.
- You work hard and are good at paying attention and listening.
- You are really good at doing lots of things especially working together and sharing.
- You are kind to everyone and make the school a very happy place.
- The adults are really good at helping you to learn and make everything lots of fun.
- Your headteacher is really special and she thinks that you deserve the best of everything. I know that the staff and governors also think the same.

You can help to make the school even better by trying to use lots of new words when you are talking about your work.

I hope that you will always be as happy at school as you are now. Thank you for making my visit so much fun.

Best wishes

Sean O'Toole Lead inspector