

The Lawns Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109414
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	309973
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Sue Hall

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	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Blannin
Headteacher	Ms Karen Navesey
Date of previous school inspection	29 March 2004
School address	The Baulk Biggleswade Bedfordshire SG18 0PT
Telephone number	01767 312312
Fax number	01767 315757

Age group	3–4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Lawns Nursery School serves the town of Biggleswade and also provides additional resources for children in particular need of support from a wider area. The proportion with a range of particular needs is therefore higher than average. The nursery has undergone significant changes in recent years becoming an Early Excellence Centre and then being designated a Children's Centre in 2003. Most of the children are from White British backgrounds, with only a very small number at the early stages of learning English. The school holds a Healthy Eating Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The nursery provides a good quality of education. This judgement matches that of the school and reflects the many improvements made since the previous inspection. The accommodation and resources, especially the outside garden area are now excellent and enable the staff to provide a stimulating range of practical activities. Parents are generally very pleased with the education and care of their children. This is reflected in many positive comments including one rightly noting 'The staff are caring and put children's needs first. The children make good progress ...'

Children enter the Nursery at around the age of three with skills and knowledge that, though very wide ranging, are slightly below the expectations for their age. Most settle well and make good and occasionally very good progress. Therefore, when they leave the nursery, many meet the expectations for their age and a growing number exceed these targets. Children of all abilities, and from all backgrounds, achieve well and boys and girls make equal progress. As they grow in confidence, many develop a good range of skills that contribute to their future well-being.

Children's personal development is good overall. Their enjoyment of the nursery and the range of activities provided is outstanding. Most have excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle through eating a well balanced diet and exercising. Behaviour is good and, though a small number struggle to behave appropriately at times, most understand that they need to play sensibly to ensure they and their friends are safe. Many children enjoy taking on responsibilities in and around the nursery, which makes a valuable contribution to the school community.

Teaching and learning are good. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and of what they can achieve, which many are keen to live up to. However, at times, staff miss opportunities to model and encourage children to use key words in order to develop a wider vocabulary. The curriculum is good. There are many opportunities for children to choose activities, and use of the outdoor area is excellent. Much work has recently been undertaken to improve planning to teach letters, sounds and numbers. However, as activities are not structured enough to ensure sufficient depth in children's learning, more remains to be done to embed this fully into day-to-day practices. Care, guidance and support are good overall with excellent pastoral care. Staff know and look after the children and their families extremely well. There are excellent links with a very wide range of external agencies that provide highly effective support to all, including those identified as vulnerable. Staff are working hard to improve the use of assessment data to check, track and compare the progress of different groups.

Leadership and management of the school are good. The head of centre and staff are a very committed team who work tirelessly to support the school community. This, coupled with the improvements already made, ensures there is good capacity to continue to improve.

There are opportunities to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning but these are not extensive or rigorous enough to identify areas for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the children's knowledge of letters, sounds and numbers to further develop their basic skills.
- Develop the formal monitoring and evaluation of what the school provides in order to identify what else could be improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The nursery is at the heart of the Children's Centre provision for families in and around Biggleswade. Many children when they start have limited personal and social development and their communication skills are not strong. This sometimes affects their behaviour and relationships and staff work successfully to provide lots of opportunities for the children to work and play together which supports their development in all areas. Children's development is initially slightly below expectations in other areas, though their physical development is slightly better and generally as expected. Children settle well in the nursery and make good overall progress, which enables them to achieve well. Therefore, when they leave the nursery their skills, knowledge and understanding are generally in line with expectations for their age and a growing number exceed the targets expected of them. The very tiny number of children learning English and those with a variety of additional needs also achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children really enjoy their time at nursery, particularly when playing outside. For their age most children have an excellent understanding of how to be healthy and identify the benefits of exercise and eating sensibly. Many also recognise the importance of adopting safe practices and how their behaviour impacts on others. While behaviour is good overall a small number struggle to behave appropriately. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and with extensive opportunities for children to develop social skills especially when using the outdoor area. Children develop an awareness of the beauty of the world around them and how they can influence this when growing their own vegetables and re-cycling. They enjoy taking on responsibilities in and around school including as helpers at lunchtime. All of these activities help children grow in understanding and confidence and, therefore, prepare them well for their future. Whilst attendance is not compulsory, the school promotes regular attendance and encourages parents not to take holidays in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and children learn well. Staff manage children effectively, which ensures that in the large open plan indoor area activities are conducted in a calm and purposeful manner. Teachers and nursery nurses work well as a team and share responsibility for the organisation of the main teaching groups. Records indicate that children benefit from working as part of a

regular group led by a different 'key worker' each term. There is generally a good level of challenge in most tasks and staff are aware of the need to ensure that child chosen activities are purposeful and extend learning. While teachers use questions well to stimulate children's thinking they sometimes miss opportunities to model and encourage the children to use a wider vocabulary.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the curriculum is greatly enhanced by the excellent facilities and resources available. The accommodation is bright and stimulating and the main strength is the excellent provision for outdoor education. This is a stunning area much loved by the children. Planning covers all the appropriate areas of learning for this age. There is a generally good balance of teacher directed and child initiated activities although at times some child chosen activities could be more structured and linked to the development of key skills. Therefore, while the planning and teaching of letters, sounds and numbers is satisfactory, some activities lack depth and could be extended further even for the youngest children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The overall care, guidance and support of children are good and, within this overall judgement, the pastoral care of children is excellent. The school works very effectively with a wide range of groups that support vulnerable children and their families. There are secure procedures for child protection and checks of those who help in school. Mid-day staff support the children well resulting in pleasant lunchtimes where children learn appropriate behaviours. The school provides opportunities that involve the children in taking responsibility for their actions so that most learn to play safely and to get on with one another. Academic guidance is generally good. Staff check and track the progress children make and are working with increasing success to extend the use of such data to check and track the progress that individuals and groups make over time.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The head of centre provides a strong and purposeful lead to the staff team and sets a clear vision for further improvement. Her hard work and dedication is reflected in the significant development of what was a small nursery into the now much larger and very well equipped Children's Centre. The head of centre is well supported by the deputy who has responsibility for many day-to-day aspects of management. The staff team are enthusiastic and, whilst faced with the many changes required by recent developments, share a commitment to the children and their families. Senior staff carry responsibility for the development of literacy and numeracy. The school recognises its strengths and weaknesses well. However, there are limited opportunities for them to directly monitor the effectiveness of planning, teaching and learning across the school. This limits the ability to identify areas for further improvements. Governance is generally good. Governors perform their statutory duties with understanding and are keen to extend their programme of focussed visits to ensure first hand knowledge of provision.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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

9 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of The Lawns Nursery School, Biggleswade, SG18 0PT

Thank you very much for looking after me when I visited your nursery recently. I really enjoyed meeting you in lessons and at lunchtime, and speaking to a group of the older children. I think the school provides a good quality of education for you all.

These are some of the best things I found.

- The outdoor area is fabulous and lets you use your imagination very well.
- You really enjoy your time at the nursery and look forward to coming each day.
- Mrs Navesey and the staff look after you and your families exceptionally well.
- There are excellent links with lots of other people who help you and your parents.
- You know how to lead a healthy lifestyle and enjoy lots of exercise.

This is what that I think should be improved.

- The staff could plan more activities to help you learn letters, sounds and numbers.
- The teachers could check what happens in lessons and your work to find out what else could be improved.

To help your school even more please try to make sure you come to school regularly and remember to always be kind to everyone.

Yours sincerely

Sue Hall

Lead inspector