

# Muriel Green Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133975
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	316227
<b>Inspection date</b>	24 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mike Best

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	0–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	68
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Andrew Freeman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Barbara Snijder
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	St Albans Childrens Centre Church Crescent St. Albans Hertfordshire AL3 5JB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01727 891111
<b>Fax number</b>	01727 891114

<b>Age group</b>	0–5
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well children are achieving in all six areas of learning
- how effectively information about what children know and can do is used to plan their next steps in learning
- how effectively the leadership team plan for and bring about, improvement.

Evidence was gathered from:

- the school's self-evaluation report and nursery improvement plan
- observation of the nursery at work
- discussions with children, staff, parents and governors
- the analysis of parental questionnaires.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Muriel Green Nursery School is part of the St Albans Children's Centre, which offers a range of specialist support for children, parents and carers from childcare professionals. The governing body has statutory responsibility for the nursery but not the centre. The nursery offers 90 part-time places for children aged from three and a half years to four and a half years. Additionally, 60 day care places are offered for children aged from three months to four plus years. The nursery is open each weekday (excluding bank and public holidays) from 07.45 to 18.15 for 50 weeks per year.

When they enter the nursery at three and a half years old, most children's skills and experiences are similar to the levels expected for their age. About 15 % of children come from minority ethnic backgrounds and two children are at the early stages of learning English. Three children have statements of special education needs, two of whom have dual placements with a nearby special school. Although there are small pockets of deprivation locally, the nursery serves a relatively affluent area. From Muriel Green Nursery children move to Reception classes in a variety of schools in the area to continue their Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) education.

## 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 that is very popular with children and parents alike. The setting's education and care provision are seamless and consistent, and are highly effective in meeting the needs of children, parents and carers. Children's achievement is outstanding, because the excellent provision for helping them learn and develop is highly focused on fulfilling the needs of each and every individual. This comment from one parent reflects the views of many others, 'Our son is very happy; his self-confidence has grown dramatically since starting school. He feels valued, appreciated, respected and loved by the staff and enjoys every aspect of the day. The staff are always on hand to talk to us and always make us feel welcome.'

Babies and toddlers in the day care provision enjoy outstandingly close and caring relationships with the staff. Well-developed and sensitive induction arrangements enable parents and children to get to know each other extremely well and this successfully eases children's transition into the nursery. As a result, they settle exceptionally quickly and, beneath the busy, bubbly and purposeful atmosphere in each of the rooms, there is a calm sense of security and contentment in which, as another parent comments, children 'blossom and flourish'. Parents much appreciate the staff sending a message of reassurance to them during the day, particularly when a child has returned after an absence or has had an unsettled night. The all-round development of these youngest children is successfully promoted through a well-planned range of activities that are carefully adapted to meet children's individual needs. A highly favourable adult to child ratio ensures that each child has plenty of attention and staff are expert at initiating and developing their play. One outstanding feature is the way staff use a rich vocabulary to encourage, praise and extend children's participation, concentration and independence in a wide range of appealing learning activities; another is the high quality written communication between staff and parents which provides an exceedingly comprehensive account of all aspects of the child's day.

When they start in the Nursery class at three and a half years of age, children's skills and experiences are broadly average. Boys and girls alike achieve consistently well and many make excellent progress in all areas of learning. Consequently, most are well on track to at least meet the expected standards for the end of the EYFS, with a substantial proportion of children set to exceed them. Children who find learning difficult make excellent progress relative to their starting points and capabilities. The school's excellent, yet readily manageable, systems for recording what children know and can do promptly highlight where an individual needs extra help, consolidation or challenge. Using the information they collect on a daily basis, staff draw up carefully tailored learning programmes which are exceptionally well-matched to children's needs. This individual approach to children's learning and development is the cornerstone of the outstanding quality of teaching. Learning activities are appealing, extremely well-resourced and managed, and conducted at a good pace, which successfully engages children's attention. Staff provide a good balance between adult-led activities and those the children choose for themselves. In this context, children's learning is highly effective because staff intervene expertly, when appropriate, to refocus children's attention or unobtrusively support the next steps in learning.

The Nursery curriculum is rich and varied and provides an excellent basis for children's learning and their high levels of enjoyment. Staff very successfully employ a thematic approach to their planning of activities that incorporate elements from all the areas of learning. The accommodation is spacious, well used and maintained to a high standard. Learning resources

are of high quality and readily accessible by adults and children. Children make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment to produce, for example, eye-catching and colourful pictures which they delight in showing to friends and adults alike. A wide range of visitors to the school significantly enhances children's learning. The nursery's outside facilities provide well for children's physical development and use of the locality helps children to increase their knowledge and understanding of the wider world. However, there are some missed opportunities to develop children's skills and understanding in other areas of learning in the outdoors. As a result, their preparation for their future economic well-being is good rather than outstanding because children are not sufficiently applying what they know and can do in different contexts.

Procedures for promoting children's welfare are excellent. Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and risk assessments are very thorough. Staff are highly successful in helping children learn how to keep safe and healthy. Personal hygiene routines are well established and children receive sensitive support in becoming independent. Children enjoy a range of fruit and vegetables at snack time, with one confidently explaining that 'we need our vitamins each day'. Wholesome midday meals are prepared on the premises and children respond well to encouragement to try different dishes. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Their behaviour is exemplary; children demonstrate high levels of respect for each other, adults, and living things through their encounters with Sunshine, the nursery's resident cat. Children's contribution to the community is promoted effectively through their support for local charities. Their celebration of festivals from around the world, often with the help of parents and staff associated with the Children's Centre, successfully promotes children's appreciation and understanding of the many different cultures within the local community.

The headteacher's first-class leadership of the highly committed and hard-working staff team has been pivotal in ensuring the Nursery's excellent progress since its previous inspections. Everyone works extremely well together, sharing the headteacher's insightful vision and clear direction for the Nursery's development. Links with outside agencies, childcare professionals, schools and parents are excellent and contribute significantly to the children's high achievement. The governing body has an excellent understanding of the Nursery's work, much of which is based on first-hand observation. The governors' annual report to parents provides a wealth of information about the Nursery. Rigorous and accurate evaluation of the Nursery's performance informs plans for the future, and these are directly linked to performance management. Issues are carefully discussed and debated by staff with the result that priorities are well-thought through, with clear goals and very effective arrangements for monitoring and evaluating progress. The Nursery's capacity for further improvement is excellent. Its finances are expertly managed and very well used for the benefit of children to provide outstanding value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop and extend the use of the outdoor classroom in all areas of children's learning.



## 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 is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
The standards[1] reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

## Annex B

### Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Muriel Green Nursery School, St Albans, AL3 5JB

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited you recently. We had a super time seeing you do so many interesting things and listening to everything you wanted us to know. Your Mums and Dads tell us that they are very pleased with the Nursery and delighted that you are so keen to come each day.

We think your nursery is fantastic and here are some of the reasons why,

- You are very happy and get on exceptionally well with everyone.
- You are always busy, work hard and do well.
- You are kind to each other and your behaviour is absolutely great.
- The grown-ups take really good care of you and make learning fun because they are wonderful teachers.
- The people in charge are exceedingly good at running the Nursery.
- Your teachers, Mums and Dads, and all the people who help you, work together extremely well.

You told us how much you like going outside and we think it would be terrific if your teachers could make sure that you do as much learning outdoors as you do indoors.

Keep working hard and enjoying yourselves.

Bye for now

Mike Best

Lead inspector