

Cherry Trees Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109413
Local Authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	324955
Inspection date	23 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins

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	0-5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Prof Martin Woodhead
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Whalley
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2006
School address	Hawkins Road Bedford Bedfordshire MK42 9LS
Telephone number	01234 354 788
Fax number	01234 401 331

Age group	0-5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well school leaders monitor children's progress, and how high standards have been in recent years, especially for boys in literacy and calculation skills
- how successfully next-steps targets and feedback are used
- how effectively leaders develop children's understanding of national issues.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, senior teachers, childcare manager, staff, children, the Chair of the Governing Body and governors, observations of teaching and learning, displays and photographs, as well as an analysis of school data on standards and progress, and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average nursery school. Half of the children are from White British backgrounds and the other half are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is typical nationally. Over half of the children are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. A significant proportion of children join or leave the school part way through the academic year. Children develop their skills in three main areas, with three smaller rooms for work in small groups, and a large outside area with an all-weather cover. The school has the Under Five's Healthy Eating Award. It also has Effective Early Learning (EEL) and Baby Effective Early Learning (BEEL) accreditations.

Childcare for 46 children aged up to eight years is provided on the site, managed by the school governors and so inspection findings are included in this report. Full daycare for 38 children aged up to five years is available from 08.00 to 18.00, 49 weeks a year. At present there are 51 children on roll attending full or part-time, 20 children receive government funding. Various childcare sessions are available between 08.00 and 18.00. A further eight places are available for children between three and under eight years before and after school during the school holidays. Breakfast and after-school provision is available between 08.00 to 9.00 and 15.15 to 18.00. A holiday club is open during school breaks from 08.00 to 18.00 except during the Christmas holidays and the first week of the summer break. Children are cared for in three rooms with two dedicated outside areas. All but two members of the 15 staff have a level 2 or level 3 qualification in childcare.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Cherry Trees Nursery is a good school. It has some outstanding features. Children's personal development is outstanding and a wonderful strength of the school. All staff provide a committed and excellent level of support and welfare. The children get a magnificent start to their education in the Nursery and childcare setting. Whether they start at the beginning or part way through the taught year, children of all abilities and backgrounds settle quickly into school life. This is because an impressive partnership is in place between the school's leaders, staff, other agencies and parents. One parent summed it up by saying, 'My child started at the Nursery this term and has settled in very well. All staff are very nice and welcoming. It has a lovely atmosphere.' The availability of the family worker and staff at the beginning and end of the day enables parents to discuss concerns freely and gain advice. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire are delighted with the care that children receive and their achievements.

Children gain great enjoyment from the many rich and exciting activities planned for them. This is clearly visible when observing the children learning and exploring ideas in the Nursery and childcare areas. Staff expertise develops children's skills effectively in topics that cover many areas of learning at one time. Exciting projects are undertaken and recently part of the Nursery was turned into a cafe. Displays and photographs celebrate children's high-quality creative and artistic skills. For example, children created beautiful bookmarks decorated with Chinese script in their work on the Chinese New Year. Children who speak English as an additional language achieve well because they are supported successfully. Bilingual staff speed children's progress and greatly help them to access all aspects of school life. Effective support for those children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to make good progress. Individual education plans are reviewed regularly, but targets are not always specific and measurable and, occasionally, children do not reach them. The children learn about all areas of the curriculum successfully due to careful planning by staff. A wide range of visitors develops children's understanding extensively, including that of learning about other cultures. For example, children learned to make chapattis when a visitor demonstrated how to make and cook them. Children are well prepared for the next stage of education because their social skills are highly developed and they make good progress in literacy and numeracy. Staff ensure that children move very smoothly to the next stage of education by attending a few sessions and having lunch at the primary school in the term before they transfer.

The school's leaders place huge importance on maintaining children's healthy lifestyles. Consequently, the children are greatly encouraged to eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise. Each week, they enjoy learning to cook. They also make enthusiastic use of the outside areas to extend their learning. Discussion times enable children to learn exceptionally well how to keep themselves safe inside and outside the school, which works carefully to safeguard them. Safeguarding procedures meet all requirements. The children are also kept safe when they use the internet. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They learn to reflect on their own and others' feelings very well, because staff are sensitive to how important children's well-being is to their learning and monitor this extremely carefully. Those whose well-being is a concern are supported astutely. A 'kaleidoscope room' enables all children to reflect weekly on events in their lives. Attendance is good and children have very positive attitudes to learning. They behave well because staff manage them very thoughtfully but firmly.

Leaders place considerable importance on maintaining good levels of achievement. The 2008 assessments show that children made good progress from low starting points on entry to the

school. Standards are slightly above expectations in social and physical development, but are below expectations in linking sounds and letters and in calculation. For example, fewer children than expected were observed using alliteration and rhyme, or applying the concept one more or one less to a group of objects. Standards are broadly in line with expectation by the end of the Nursery in knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. The key to the school's success is the careful way staff use assessment to determine children's needs. Over the last few years children, including those from minority ethnic groups, achieve well because assessment is used effectively to support learning. Children with speech and language difficulties are supported well and so they make good progress. Regular meetings are held between senior leaders and staff to determine how to extend more able children. Thorough discussions about children who seem to be underachieving take place to determine what extra support would be useful. Attainment of different groups of boys and girls is carefully watched. Boys' attainment is lower than that of girls but they make good progress from their starting points. Senior leaders are beginning to evaluate in detail the value added to children's learning.

Effective teaching is a major reason why children make good progress in their learning. Children's basic skills develop successfully because staff explain knowledgeably how to organise activities. Strong aspects of teaching include the thoughtful use of questioning so that children learn to think deeply about what they are learning. In a good session seen, open-ended questioning allowed children to develop their observation skills in a wide variety of ways, for example, when they study tadpoles and frogspawn. Staff interact with children effectively and so language skills develop well. On a day-to-day basis, teachers use assessment well. They spend a considerable amount of time getting to know the children and assessment is on-going. Staff raise children's self-esteem with positive comments to encourage them. Occasionally, children's targets are not recorded accurately in the key areas of linking sounds and letters, and calculation, and so staff cannot give each child detailed feedback on what has been attained. In these situations, children and parents lack a full understanding of successes and ways to improve in the future.

Good leadership and management have brought about improvements. A significant development since the last inspection is the better quality of equipment, which is now good, and used well by staff. The headteacher and the senior leadership team drive improvement outstandingly well. Self-evaluation is accurate and effective and leaders are always looking for ways to improve. Plans are in place to develop further children's use of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. The different areas of learning are managed effectively. The school's leaders work well to unite the community and understand its needs. Many children take part in local events, such as the carnival. They have an excellent understanding of the problems faced by the English countryside because they have visited local woodlands and parks. The school also collects money for various national and global issues. Children decorated shopping bags and made posters to make others aware of the need to recycle materials. Governance is good and governors consistently question and challenge the school's performance. Consequently, it is in a good position to continue to improve.

Extremely effective leadership and good management ensure that children achieve well in the childcare sessions - whether at the breakfast club or during the day. Staff challenge and encourage children. For example, they learn to paint detailed pictures of creatures. Planning for each area of learning is successfully displayed on classroom walls. Staff use assessment thoughtfully, and plans are adapted everyday to meet children's needs and interests. Occasionally, records do not use the national developmental guidance closely enough, and so not all staff are fully aware of whether a child is underachieving. Children under the age of two

years are effectively supported and cared for. A notebook is used well to inform parents what their child has done during the session. Staff are readily available to talk to parents when children are dropped off and collected.

The children behave very well and develop independence because staff have high expectations of them. For example, children can have breakfast when they choose during the first hour of the session. Significant improvements have enabled children to drink water when they like because it is always readily available. Each child's welfare is a very high priority. For example, staff regularly renew their training in first aid, hygiene and child protection for early years children. All children are kept safe because accidents are recorded carefully and the manager keeps a diligent watch on patterns which may appear. Children go outside regularly, but the setting is aware that the equipment for these areas is basic and therefore they are not used fully.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by ensuring that all children's targets in literacy and calculation are recorded clearly and shared regularly with parents.
- Ensure that childcare records use developmental guidance more rigorously to identify if a child is underachieving.

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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 is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do children in the EYFS 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?	1

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Cherry Trees Nursery School, Bedford, MK42 9LS

Thank you for helping me to find out about your school. I enjoyed watching sessions and talking to some of you. You attend a happy and friendly school. Good things about your school include:

- you make good progress in your work
- you concentrate and behave well in sessions
- you really enjoy all the things you do at school
- your headteacher and teachers have very good ideas about ways to improve the school
- teaching is good and the staff work hard to make sessions interesting
- a very good partnership is in place between the school, your parents and others
- staff care for you very well and listen to you thoughtfully.

I have asked your school and childcare setting to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are to:

- make sure that your targets in school are recorded more clearly in literacy and calculation and shared with your parents regularly
- improve childcare records so that staff are more aware of anyone who is falling behind in their learning.

Keep listening carefully to staff comments and enjoy all the wonderful things you are learning at Cherry Trees Nursery School.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Cousins

Lead inspector