

The Lawns Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109414
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	337280
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Macdonald
Headteacher	Mrs Valerie Ellar (Acting Head of Centre)
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2008
School address	The Baulk Biggleswade SG18 0PT
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Age group	3–4
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2010
Inspection number	337280

Registered childcare provision	The Lawns Early Excellence and Children's Centre
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	83
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Three members of staff were observed during five adult led sessions. Other staff were observed during nursery sessions where children worked on activities they had chosen. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documents including equal opportunities policies, development plans and documentation for parents. Children's records and data on progress and attainment were scrutinised and 20 questionnaires from parents analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of provision to address the gaps in children's numeracy skills and its effectiveness in raising attainment
- how well changes in funding are being managed by governors and the impact, if any, these are having on its longer term development
- how effectively the school plans to promote community cohesion.

Information about the school

The Lawns Nursery School serves the town of Biggleswade. The majority of children are from White British backgrounds but a growing proportion, currently about 15%, are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Some of these children are at the early stages of learning English when they join. The school has a small minority of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It has Healthy School's status and recently gained Forest School status. A wide range of extended services for children and their families are available through the children's centre, which is on the same site and managed by the Nursery. The centre provision currently includes care for two to three year olds, a before and after school club, parent and child sessions, baby massage classes and support for childminders. There are currently 37 two to three year olds on roll and 46 children between the ages of two to nine in the before and after school clubs. The numbers on roll for the holiday care depend on uptake but the school is registered to take two groups of up to 24 children. Some of the extended services are in the process of being restructured due to changes in the way the school and centre are funded. This has resulted in a reduction in the budget already and created some uncertainty about future funding. The current headteacher and her deputy are in acting positions.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Lawns Nursery School provides a good start to children's education. They enjoy the broad range of activities on offer and relish their time in the outdoor area. Children make good progress in their learning and leave well prepared for primary school having developed sound skills in early reading and writing as well as a secure grasp of numbers. Aspects of their personal development are outstanding. For example, they have an exceptionally good understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe. A warm and nurturing environment enables children to develop as confident and self-assured learners who form stable relationships with one another and adults.

Teaching is good with examples of outstanding teaching. More formal sessions, where adults lead the learning, are well managed and well structured. However, questioning does not always fully extend children's thinking or vocabulary. The curriculum provides very good opportunities for children to develop their early writing skills. There are many opportunities for children to practise counting but fewer for developing their calculation skills which are weaker. Opportunities for creative development are outstanding and children make exceptionally good progress in areas such as painting and model making. There are striking displays of paintings of daffodils and large scale models of the billy goats from The Billy Goats Gruff created by the children.

The quality of care in both the school and the centre is outstanding. Children are very safe and they and their families extremely well supported. Home visits enable staff to build strong relationships with families. Staff know individual children and their needs exceptionally well. Those with disabilities are extremely well supported. Care is sensitively provided to these children so that they are included in all activities, encouraged to develop independence but have help close at hand should they need it.

The acting headteacher provides a very clear sense of direction and, working in close partnership with her deputy and the governing body, ensures that school and centre staff are working towards commonly understood goals. As a result, staff morale is high despite the uncertainties of restructuring. Governors and senior staff have a proactive and prudent approach to managing the changes in funding and are taking practical steps to maintain the best service possible for local families.

Accurate self-evaluation based on information gained from a range of monitoring activities means that senior staff are well informed about the strengths in provision and outcomes and where improvements are needed. However, not all staff with leadership responsibilities are involved in monitoring activities and, hence, in helping the school to improve. Nonetheless, given the accuracy of self-evaluation, the improvements since the last inspection and the effectiveness with which senior staff and governors are grappling

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with restructuring the services, there is good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for children to extend their thinking and vocabulary by:
 - asking more open and probing questions and following up answers with further questions
 - developing greater use of pair talk during whole class or adult led sessions so that more children are actively involved in discussing and developing ideas.
- Develop the curriculum to include more day-to-day activities that help children to develop their calculation skills.
- Involve a wider range of staff in the school's monitoring and evaluation work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**2**

Children begin at the school with a broad range of attainment, but their overall skills and knowledge are significantly below age related expectations. This is especially so in relation to their literacy and numeracy skills as well as aspects of their personal, social and emotional development. They make good strides in their learning and develop skills that are broadly in line with their ages in most aspects of literacy and numeracy. However, their calculation skills are lower. Children develop good knowledge of the world around them and their physical and creative development often exceeds age related expectations. In lessons, children are keen to answer questions, sometimes so keen they cannot help themselves and call out the answer. They readily participate in discussions and ask questions. Children demonstrate good levels of curiosity and enthusiastically explore the world around them. Their concentration levels are good when working on activities or listening to a story. Children with special educational needs are well supported and achieve well as a result. Those who speak a different language at home develop their English rapidly because the practical nature of the work means they can join in equally with others.

Children's social development is good. They are curious about those who are different and enjoy using words from other languages. Children make a strong contribution to the smooth running of the school through their good behaviour and consideration for others and by acting as helpers. They also contribute to the wider community by helping to raise funds for good causes. Regular attendance supports their learning. Children in the after school club and those two to three year olds in the centre also enjoy their time in care. The youngest children develop good skills through activities in the sand-pit and painting. They also develop good eating habits through the healthy snacks provided.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Children's attainment ¹	3
The quality of children's learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which children feel safe	1
Children's behaviour	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Children's attendance ¹	2
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Activities provided for children are practical in nature and exceptionally well structured so that they promote children's learning and their independence. Staff plan work so that it matches the needs of individual children well. They prompt and encourage them to explore and solve problems though sometimes miss opportunities to ask more probing questions. Adult led sessions are brisk and of well-judged length. Questioning is used to involve children in their learning during these sessions, but opportunities are missed to engage more children and develop their ideas by asking them to discuss questions in pairs. Children are carefully monitored to make sure that they work across different areas and have exposure to a wide range of learning experiences both indoors and out. The excellent outdoor area is used well to promote learning across all areas and children enjoy being outdoors. Staff maintain careful observation notes of each individual child and use this information well to plan the next steps in their learning. Work is developing to include children more actively in identifying their own strengths and weaknesses. Overall, the school provides a vibrant and interesting curriculum. Resources are well used to stimulate children's creativity and good use is made of computers to enhance learning. The school is beginning to look at ways of involving children in photography and film making. Appealing role-play activities engage children well and adults readily model role playing to encourage and show children what to do. Improved opportunities for literacy are leading to better reading skills and understanding of letter sounds. However, a more robust approach to teaching simple calculation has yet to be established. Visitors to the school enrich the curriculum. However, there have been few

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visits out in the past couple of years but plans are underway to reverse this trend.

Staff provide exceptionally good care and support for individual children. This is the case both in the extended provision and the school. Children who become upset or tearful, as they do on occasion, are skilfully managed so that, in no time at all, they are again engaged in fruitful activities. Links with other agencies are very strong and used to support individual children and their families exceptionally well. Much time and effort goes into encouraging good attendance even though at this age it is not statutory. Children are kept very safe and encouraged to think about how to be safe.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

That the school has maintained and even improved on the quality of provision since the last inspection is indicative of the good leadership and management provided by senior staff. During a time of upheaval and change, staff feel well supported and informed. Information from observations of teaching and learning is used well to develop staff skills. However, sometimes new initiatives take longer to be fully established because staff with responsibilities are not involved enough in checking and improving the quality of teaching.

The school and centre successfully engage with parents and carers through home visits, newsletters, the website and initiatives such as the dads and granddads club. School systems ensure that equality of opportunity is good. This is why all groups are making similar progress over time and every child has the same opportunities to join in with activities and make a contribution to the school community. Safeguarding procedures are met and arrangements are regularly reviewed. Good planning ensures that community cohesion is well promoted. It is strong at school level and the school reaches out very well to its local community especially through the extended services. It is not complacent, however, and is ambitious to have an even wider reach across Biggleswade, and this is supported by a well considered plan. Links with the adjoining primary school are strong. Links at United Kingdom and global level are developing well. For example, the school has links with schools in Indonesia and elsewhere in Britain which are being strengthened and extended.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are overall very positive about the school and the centre and appreciate the range of services provided. They are very happy with the quality of provision in the school and the progress their children are making. A very small number felt that they were not receiving enough information, for example about the recent changes or their children's progress, or being sufficiently consulted. The inspection findings do not substantiate most of these concerns. Much information about the changes has been sent out and meetings organised to keep parents informed. Whilst parents have ready access to children's folders with notes on their ongoing progress, the school acknowledges it could do more to send parents information about how well their children are getting on.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at The Lawns Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 126 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	70	5	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	80	4	20	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	65	5	25	1	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	80	3	15	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	80	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	75	4	20	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	80	4	20	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	16	80	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	70	6	30	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	55	8	40	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	35	12	60	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	12	60	7	35	1	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	80	4	20	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its children's needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a child in their learning and development.
Attainment:	in other phases of school, for example primary schools, attainment is the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. However, there is no national average for three- and four-year-olds. Therefore, in inspections of nursery schools, inspectors take account of expectations in the age-related bands of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in nursery sessions and over longer periods of time.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 March 2010

Dear Children

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

We enjoyed visiting your Nursery and the centre, and in particular, we enjoyed talking to you. We should like to thank you for making us feel so welcome. Your Nursery gives you a good start to your education and helps you to get ready for primary school.

These are some of the best things about the school.

You enjoy your time at the Nursery and get on remarkably well with one another.

You are exceptionally good at keeping fit and know a lot about the foods that are good for you.

There are lots of interesting and exciting activities for you to do.

The garden is a wonderful area which you love to explore.

Your art and craft work is vibrant and colourful and shows considerable skill.

Your headteacher, staff and governors work well together to make sure you have a good school.

You are exceptionally well looked after so that you feel very safe.

There are a few things that we would like your school to do next.

Make sure the staff ask you more questions to make you think hard and also give you a chance to talk to a friend before giving an answer.

Give you more activities that help you to work out number problems.

Get more adults involved in helping to make the school even better.

Yours sincerely

Gulshanbir Kayembe

Lead inspector

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