

Willow Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109415
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	337281
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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 of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Hassall
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Bell
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, one of whom spent her time reviewing the school's safeguarding arrangements. The lead inspector observed all the teachers and most support staff over seven lessons. Meetings were held with children, governors and staff. No meetings were held with the parents. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at documentation, including the school improvement plan, safeguarding, curriculum planning, information about children's progress and individual education plans. Questionnaires from 66 parents and carers and 17 staff were analysed.

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

- how effectively the curriculum has been extended and adapted to match well the needs of more able children
- the extent to which planning for learning results in activities that capture the imagination of all children and enable them to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world
- whether progress through the school is good or outstanding for all groups of children from their starting points, particularly boys.

Information about the school

Children attend this popular school on a part-time basis from the term following their third birthday. Forty per cent of the children have previously accessed playgroup provision. There is also childcare provision during the school day for 12 children from the age of three. The percentage of children from minority ethnic groups has increased since the last inspection to 25%, and 20% speak English as their second language. Of this 20%, approximately half are at the early stages of learning to speak English. Ten per cent of the children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school works with a neighbour to provide wrap-around facilities for children from both schools. This provision is through a breakfast and after-school club, which is open five days a week and run by the governing body. In conjunction with neighbouring lower and middle schools, the school provides extended services, which include groups to help parents and carers to support their children's education.

The school holds numerous awards. Most recently it has achieved the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS), Investors in People status and the Eco Schools Silver award. In 2009 it was awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark for the third time. It also achieved the National Association Challenge Award for Able Children in Education (NACE) for its whole-school provision for the able, gifted and talented.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school which provides the children with a high quality education and excellent preparation for lower school. It is led exceptionally well by the headteacher, who drives improvement very successfully through rigorous monitoring and accurate evaluation of every aspect of the school's work, with strong support from the staff. The area for improvement from the last inspection, for example, has been addressed effectively and, as a result, the quality of provision for more able children in all learning activities has broadened and become much more challenging and focused, helping to accelerate their progress. Staff are empowered through very focused training, so that they work confidently in a variety of teaching, learning and leadership roles. The strong track record of improvement, together with good governance, show the capacity for the school to move further forward is excellent.

The quality of the children's care is outstanding and results in their excellent personal development and behaviour. In this inclusive school, children develop into happy and confident learners, who work and play safely, cooperatively and increasingly independently in a supportive environment. Community cohesion is a developing aspect with structured planning not yet fully in place. However, the very carefully chosen activities and ethos of the school promote the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development excellently. Attendance is above average, supported by the high regard of the parents for the school and their almost unanimous endorsement of everything that it does.

The outcomes for the children are outstanding. They make excellent progress because of the high quality provision, including consistently good and often excellent teaching, whether whole class, in small groups or one-to-one. Most children attain above average standards by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, with a few well above this level. It is through the myriad of imaginative and challenging opportunities for them to find out for themselves that children develop a love of learning and awe and wonder of the world around them. They successfully develop and refine a wide range of skills. This is so for all groups of children, including the boys, whose progress accelerates due to activities that motivate them by focusing on their preference for learning through physical activity and are pitched at the right level. Assessments of what children know are reflected in very helpful programmes for those needing extra support.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Establish a programme of learning to ensure that the children develop a secure understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of the

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world in which we live, supported by the school's regular evaluation of the impact on community cohesion.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Most children start the Nursery school with levels of knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with those expected nationally, although there is some variation between intakes. Generally, the boys' levels are a little lower than those of the girls, but the carefully planned activities and good quality support enable the vast majority of the boys to catch up. The school's information and inspection evidence shows that children make excellent progress from their starting points by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Attainment is above average, including in language and literacy, a major focus for the school. All groups achieve highly, including the boys. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities also achieve outstandingly, and their very specific goals in their individual education plans accelerate their progress. Those who are learning English as a second language achieve outstandingly because of excellent teaching and support. During the inspection, all the children made rapid progress in a music lesson, full to the brim with opportunities to learn creatively and imaginatively, and to develop their reasoning, language and communication skills. They were delighted with opportunities to practise rhythm through beats, practise singing with actions, and to consider how a guinea pig would feel in the presence of a cat. Likewise, outdoor learning, a major strength of the provision, promotes all aspects very skilfully. Role-play at the road works, the crime scene and the petrol station provided many memorable experiences which promoted the broadest of learning opportunities for the children.

All learners work and play safely, considerately and cooperatively and can explain why it is right to do so. By copying how staff treat each other and them, and through the personal, social and health education programme that runs through all learning, children's actions demonstrate their value of everybody for what they are. Fund raising reflects their positive attitudes to others. Although staff have very high expectations of children's conduct, learners are always so busy and involved in their work that their behaviour is consistently outstanding. Children make excellent progress in their adoption of healthy lifestyles, through lots of sporting activities and imaginative teaching about the foods that they need to keep them fit. The children are given daily opportunities to take responsibility and to cooperate with others, developing and refining their social and moral skills as well as those in literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT). Their spiritual development runs through many aspects of learning, with many of the children, for example, reflecting on the wonder of the world as they see the plant and animal life in the garden. Visits to, for example, churches, a mosque and a mandir are enabling the children to find out about our multi-cultural society. Preparation for the next stage of their education is outstanding. Through 'Cafe Willow,' the children practised many skills needed in running a business, learning about the importance of health and safety rules, cooking, selling food and being waiters. Such activities, together with their above average knowledge and skills, confirm their excellent preparation for the next stage of their education.

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These are the grades for children's outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is outstanding and never less than good, resulting in children's excellent progress. Very positive relationships between the children and the staff, high quality resources and a vibrant learning environment mean that the children cannot wait to get started each day. Each half term, their progress is checked in detail across all areas so that support or extra challenge can be put in to learning. The teachers use this information very carefully so that activities are usually matched closely to the children's needs. Children are able to concentrate for long periods because of the teachers' good planning and the emphasis on learning for themselves. Spoken feedback is very helpful because the children know how to improve their work. They enjoy having targets to aim for and are very proud to achieve them. The teachers' careful questioning encourages them to think, and challenges them to move forward in their learning. This was demonstrated when the children were guessing the number of eggs in a box in a lesson to develop their skills in calculation.

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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Learning is very broad. A major strength is in the choice of activities in the colourful classrooms and corridors with their many displays of the children's work. Children engage enthusiastically with the activities that are provided because the starting point for learning is within their personal experiences. All activities provide opportunities for the children to develop a range of skills and knowledge through carefully planned experiences, which balance teacher-led and independent learning, and cater equally well for boys and girls. Phonics is established in learning, providing a good structure for children's writing and reading development. Provision for more able children has improved significantly in the challenge offered in all areas of learning, including in their thinking skills as they play creatively and imaginatively. Outside areas are used exceptionally well as extensions to classrooms, enhancing and extending children's learning and their knowledge of the world, and to promote physical activity. Personal, social and health education is the foundation for all learning, through the curriculum and in daily routines. The programme is wide ranging and significant in children's excellent personal development. The other priorities of the curriculum are the development of children's literacy, language and numeracy skills, which are taught creatively, imaginatively and regularly through play. Learning is increasingly personalised, with ability groups for mathematics and literacy and support groups for children who find some aspects of learning harder to grasp. ICT is established in all activities, with regular provision for children to learn independently as well as through direct teaching.

The quality of care is exceptional. Staff have a very good understanding of the children's needs and circumstances, because of the detailed induction programme leading up to their arrival. As a result, the children settle quickly and feel secure in the very safe and supportive environment in which they are nurtured, helped and valued by the staff. The school has excellent relationships with outside agencies, which they use very effectively in the promotion of children's academic needs and emotional welfare. Teaching assistants and nursery nurses support constructively the learning of those children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and their role also extends to the needs of all. Parents are respected and welcomed into the school as vital partners in their children's learning. Children's 'special books' enable their parents to hold extensive dialogue with them at home.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

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Very strong and focused leadership by the headteacher is the key to the continued success and development of the school. Her rigorous evaluation of all of its work enables the school to sustain and develop further its high quality provision. Staff are very supportive and share the headteacher's ambition. Relevant training programmes ensure that their skills match very closely the needs of the children. Equality of opportunity is basic to all that the school does and excellent practices, including a termly audit by subject coordinators to monitor provision and outcomes for all groups of children, ensure this. Similarly, the many partnerships enrich the children's learning and their personal development. The governing body has developed its monitoring role effectively since the last inspection. Its increased understanding of the school's work has enabled governors to influence its direction to a greater extent, but there is scope for this work to go further. Safeguarding procedures and practices are outstanding in their rigour and in the robust and regular monitoring of practices. The school has made a sound start to promoting community cohesion although the school agrees that a programme for learning to ensure coverage of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic contexts is at an early stage.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were strongly supportive of every aspect of the school's work. Several took the time to write their

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reasons for this. The statement, 'This is an outstanding school in every aspect of teaching, care and commitment,' reflected the feelings of other respondents. The highest praise was that, 'This is the perfect place for children to start their education.' A more specific comment described the curriculum as 'Very detailed and covering a large range of well planned topics, such as, planting seeds, and hospitals.' Standards in all areas are considered to be of the highest order in an environment which results in happy, confident and independent learners. Only six questionnaires included any disagreement and the leadership and management of the headteacher, was singled out for particular praise.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Willow 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 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 95 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	89	7	11	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	58	88	8	12	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	42	64	22	33	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	71	17	26	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	82	12	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	74	14	21	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	67	21	32	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)	37	56	24	36	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	73	16	24	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	55	29	44	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	59	26	39	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	51	77	15	23	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	86	9	14	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



6 May 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Willow Nursery School, Luton, LU5 4QU

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I had a lovely time talking to you and watching you play and learn. Your new wildlife garden is a lovely area which you are using well to look after the animals that you see and to find out about how plants and flowers grow. I found out a lot of other things about your school and I have written them down for you:

- you enjoy school very much
- you make excellent progress
- teaching is outstanding and helps you to learn a lot for yourselves
- the activities inside and outside that you are given are really interesting and are planned carefully
- the staff care for you very well
- you know a lot about eating healthily and the importance of keeping fit
- the headteacher leads the school very strongly and all of the staff work very hard for you
- your behaviour is excellent and you work well with other children.

Another very good thing about your school is that the staff are always trying to make it even better. I have asked them to do this by giving you time in your learning to find out more about the people who make up our world, including their lifestyles, beliefs and backgrounds.

I hope you will continue to enjoy being at school.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector

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