

Woodcroft Nursery School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 114699 |
| Local Authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 338427 |
| Inspection dates | 8–9 July 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Judi Bedawi |

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

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| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3–5 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 154 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Steven Roberts |
| Headteacher | Mrs Helen Roberts |
| Date of previous school inspection | 21 March 2007 |
| School address | Dorset Avenue Great Baddow Chelmsford |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed five teachers in 14 lessons or parts of lessons. They held meetings with governors, staff, the school improvement partner and senior staff from a few schools that admit Woodcroft children. They talked informally to parents and to many children. They observed the school's work, and looked at children's 'Learning Journey' records, classroom displays, a range of school documentation, policies, monitoring records and data on children's attainment. The inspectors received and analysed 70 parental questionnaires.

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

- the impact of the system developed by the school to analyse children's progress
- the quality of links between the pre-nursery provision and the Nursery
- opportunities to develop children's understanding of the world around them.

Information about the school

Woodcroft is larger than most other Nursery schools. Little Woodcroft provides registered childcare provision for pre-nursery children aged from two to three years old, with additional 'drop in' clubs for parents with babies and toddlers. It is overseen by the headteacher with several governors on the management committee. A small minority of Nursery children attend all day. Children come mainly from the local urban area. Most are from White British backgrounds. A very few are from minority ethnic groups and at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. A few have special educational needs and/or disabilities, predominately for speech and language needs, with lesser proportions having medical, behavioural or physical disabilities. Very few have a statement of special educational needs. The school has Healthy Schools status.

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

This is a good school. Whether attending the Little Woodcroft pre-nursery or the Nursery, the children arrive happy, smiling and ready for the well-planned activities awaiting them. Their parents and carers are almost unanimous in their praise for the school's work, typically saying 'My child has a wonderful time and has been gently encouraged to try new things,' and 'My child has grown in confidence.'

The headteacher has a strong focus, together with her senior leaders and staff team, on providing children with rich play and learning experiences to capture their imagination and enjoyment of early learning. All who work in the pre-nursery and Nursery have an impressive understanding of young children's needs, from birth to five years.

Children's attainment on entry is broadly average, although their speaking, listening and early mark-making skills are mostly lower, and varies from year to year. Physical skills are generally better developed than other areas of learning, with the exciting outdoor areas used exceptionally well to extend their prowess further. The school has worked hard in developing its own system to analyse data and identify children's progress, attempting to find a way to identify relevant next steps. It covers only three of the six areas of learning and so provides an insufficiently clear overview of children's progress and attainment to summarise, for example, any emerging learning patterns. However, through regular whole staff team meetings, there is good assessment of children's individual progress. Staff share ideas to increase and support learning well, including that of children at the early stages of learning English and those with special educational needs and/or difficulties. Good teaching leads to good learning, but use of questioning does not always lead children to offer well thought out and full responses. Children enter the pre-nursery with less developed social and personal skills. Some need help with toileting, but all make good progress in improving their pre-learning skills. Observations during inspection show attainment and progress to be good.

Children's personal development is good. They are curious and eager to discover for themselves. Their independence is emerging well because staff encourage safe risk-taking in play activities. Opportunities for them to learn about communities in the United Kingdom and globally are less well developed. Children's attendance, although not statutory, is not as good as it could be because parents and carers sometimes prioritise other events ahead of school sessions, or arrive late. This limits the school's development of good attendance patterns and of children's progress.

Senior leaders have a clear view of the schools' strengths and weaknesses aided by detailed reports to governors and monitoring of performance. Attainment is above average and progress is good. Previous issues in relation to the curriculum have been

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well addressed and the school's capacity to improve further is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop teaching and learning by:
 - consistently maximising opportunities for extending children's thinking skills through questions that draw out thoughtful responses
 - ensuring that data tracking provides a comparable overview of children's progress and attainment across all areas of learning.
- Raise attendance by:
 - emphasising to parents and carers the importance of children's sustained attendance and reinforcing the schools' expectations.
- Enrich understanding of communities and lifestyles in the United Kingdom and globally by:
 - providing opportunities for children to learn more about diverse cultures and customs beyond their immediate experience
 - reflecting and building on extended family links with other countries and communities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

2

Children find school fun and show good concentration and interest, particularly in using computers and in more active pursuits. When asked how well he was doing, one child said, 'The teachers tell me,' and another said, 'I like learning how to hold scissors.' A younger boy at the end of a pre-nursery session was reluctant to leave the book he was 'reading', to go home. Children progress well in all areas of learning, although some are less keen to develop their emergent writing. A small minority confidently count to at least ten or above. Children are mostly at or above age-related expectations as they move to their next schools. A very few individuals make outstanding progress from their starting points, including those learning English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities. The imaginatively laid out garden is greatly enjoyed and helps develop children's confidence and independence very well. A small group of children independently found a small ladder, setting it carefully against a tree and checking it was secure before climbing; one child said 'I am six foot high!' Adults had no need to intervene, but children ask for help if needed. This makes them feel very safe. They are increasingly aware of others' needs and treat one another with respect. They are proud of their school and enjoy trips within the local community. They have less awareness of how other people live in the United Kingdom and around the world, although they enjoyed watching a short film about the Notting Hill Carnival, in preparation for their own carnival. Behaviour is good but not all help to tidy up at session ends. Children have a good understanding of being healthy, for example, knowing that they have to wash their hands after collecting eggs from the chickens.

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These are the grades for children's outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| Children's behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

Teamwork between teachers and their assistants is a significant strength of the good teaching. It is combined with well-focused intervention based on good individual assessment which staff regularly discuss, share and review. One parent commented, reflecting others' views, 'The pre-nursery quickly identified and set up additional support for my child.' This is a key factor in the good progress made by children learning to speak and understand English and for the children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff are well-trained to meet the needs of young children and all have had training to improve their skills in speech and language therapy. Lessons proceed at a good pace, but teachers do not always phrase questions that challenge children to think, so their response is limited to one or two words. Activities are planned seamlessly to make full use of the indoor and outdoor areas for all areas of learning. However, impromptu opportunities arising from children's ideas are not consistently used by adults to extend learning and basic skills such as emergent writing. Positive relationships and

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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mutual respect between adults and children are strong.

Curriculum provision is outstanding, with parents typically saying, 'Every week a different theme in the pre-nursery' and 'A lovely happy environment for the children to learn in everyday and bits (of work) brought home to share!' Activities are adapted and resourced very well to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those at the initial stages of learning English as an additional language. Staff are used flexibly to provide one-to-one support as needed when children choose to move between the three teaching rooms and the outdoor area. Learning was extended very well when the interactive whiteboard was used by the teacher to show the children which countries fruits come from, when tasting some fruits mentioned in the story 'Handa's Surprise'. Cross-curricular links are very well established. Children enjoy the gardening club, growing flowers and harvesting fruit and vegetables, and are becoming increasingly aware of sustainability. In the hot weather, children enjoy eating their picnic lunches in a shady outdoor area, together with staff. Visits and visitors, such as the police and firemen, extend children's understanding of staying safe and enhance their personal development.

Parents typically say, 'They are very nurturing staff and there is a safe environment' and 'The Little Woodcroft staff are dedicated to the children.' Parents are right: all staff are dedicated to putting the children first and ensuring they are enabled to learn from the very start. Children and families whose circumstances make them more vulnerable are nurtured and supported utilising a wide range of external agencies to help resolve difficulties, so that children are able to 'learn to learn'. Attention to health and safety matters is good, but staff do not consistently ensure that children put on sunhats before going outside on hot days. Monitoring of behaviour is outstanding and any very rare 'blips' are swiftly tackled long before they can escalate, because staff know the children so well. Monitoring of attendance is secure, for example, permission is required for term time holidays. However, not all parents inform the school if they decide not to bring their children for a planned session and this detracts from developing positive attendance patterns.

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 | 1 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

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Leadership and management at all levels, and including Little Woodcroft, are good and skilfully directed by the headteacher. All staff are involved and consulted about the schools' development. The governing body are skilled at monitoring the school's performance, including aspects of teaching and learning, and are not afraid to challenge and question senior leaders in the drive to raise standards further.

Safeguarding is good and exceeds government requirements, observed in the way that children are able to take measured risks in their play and learning, and in the high calibre of support for children and families whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.

The school has excellent partnerships with its parents and carers, who immensely value the opportunity to talk to staff each day. There is a high take up of classes that last over several weeks in areas including parenting skills and a great appreciation of the baby and toddler 'drop in' sessions, giving opportunity to share experiences with other parents and carers.

Partnerships to promote learning are good with access to a wide range of external support. Multi-agency meetings are often held in school. There are extensive links with the pre-school and the staff work closely together. The pre-school provision and management fully meet all requirements. Community cohesion is good particularly in the local area and there is a full audit in place. It is less developed with regard to community in the United Kingdom and globally. Equality of opportunity is good, all children make good progress and treat each other with respect and fairness. Any discrimination is effectively challenged. Finances are secure.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| 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 | 1 |
| 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 |

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| | |
|---|---|
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 2 |
|---|---|

Views of parents and carers

All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire completely agree that their children enjoy school, are kept safe and are encouraged to be healthy. They further agree that teaching, leadership and management, and meeting the needs of children are good. The overwhelming majority say that their children make enough progress, they are supported to help home learning and the school listens to them. Most parents and carers agree that they are kept well informed about how well their children are doing, that behaviour is managed effectively and that arrangements for preparing children to move from pre-nursery to the Nursery and to their next school work well. A very few parents have reservations about progress, transfer arrangements and behaviour management. The inspectors found no pattern of significant concerns and agree with parents' very positive views. All parents who responded say they are happy with the quality of education provided. The response was higher than often found.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Woodcroft 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 70 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 154 children registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 65 | 93 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 65 | 93 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 53 | 76 | 14 | 20 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 56 | 80 | 12 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 59 | 84 | 11 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 53 | 76 | 15 | 21 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 58 | 83 | 12 | 17 | 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) | 47 | 67 | 18 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 60 | 86 | 10 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 52 | 74 | 14 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 56 | 80 | 12 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 60 | 86 | 10 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 65 | 93 | 5 | 7 | 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.



12 July 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Woodcroft Nursery School, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 9UB

Thank you for giving us such a friendly welcome when we visited your good school recently and for telling us about all the things you like. It helped us a lot. We could see how much you enjoy learning and playing in and outside, using the computers, listening to stories and learning to count. You like growing fruit and vegetables and looking after the chickens. You find many new things that you are good at.

You do well in both the Nursery and pre-nursery, because the adults know how to help you learn through play. They are very clever, thinking of many really exciting activities that make you want to find out lots more. You behave well and have made good friends. All the grown-ups care for you extremely well, so that you feel safe and happy. You can help the school by reminding your mums and dads to get you to school early and to every session, unless you are ill.

Your headteacher and the staff want to make your school even better. I have asked them to:

- ask you questions that make you think hard and answer in big sentences
- give you, your families and your next school a clear picture of your progress in each area of learning
- find exciting ways to help you learn about living in the United Kingdom and about other countries far away where children have lives that are different to yours.

I hope you continue to enjoy the rest of your time at Woodcroft and keep working hard.

Yours sincerely

Judi Bedawi

Lead inspector

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