

# Ludwick Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117079
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	358076
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 September 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Rob Crompton

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	149
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Birlestone
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen James
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 July 2008
<b>School address</b>	Holwell Road Welwyn Garden City AL7 3RP
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Observations included 18 sessions led by the three teachers and eight early-years practitioners, and activities which children chose for themselves. Meetings were held with governors and staff. Inspectors looked at governing body minutes, curriculum plans and assessment documents, including children's individual 'learning journey' booklets. The questionnaires returned by 63 parents and carers and 22 staff were scrutinised.

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

- how well children are helped to understand the links between sounds and letters
- how the school engages with parents and carers who are at work during the school day
- how effectively the school promotes community cohesion and children's cultural development.

## Information about the school

This is a larger than average sized Nursery school. Most children are from White British backgrounds. About a third of children are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups, with a small minority who are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these children have speech and communication difficulties. A few children are from Traveller families. Ludwick Nursery is the lead agency for Oak Tree Children's Centre and works in partnership with the privately owned Squirrels Day Care. The school recently received the Hertfordshire School of the Year Travel Plan Award.

**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

Ludwick Nursery provides an outstanding quality of education in all areas of its provision. It is a happy, vibrant and stimulating place which enables children to thoroughly enjoy learning and make excellent progress. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard and were unanimous in saying that their children enjoy school. Their comments included, 'Our experience has been far beyond our expectations, I think Ludwick does a wonderful job and has so much to offer', and, 'The staff are fantastic and do a great job.'

This fully inclusive school warmly welcomes and cares for all children and their families. A strength is the exemplary leadership of the headteacher which, together with the sheer enthusiasm of the whole staff, provides a challenging and enjoyable start to learning.

Children enter the school with skills and knowledge that are very wide ranging but overall levels of development are below, and sometimes well below, the expectations for the age group. They make excellent progress so that, as they move into Reception, the vast majority are working within the age-related expectations. This is due to the outstanding quality of teaching underpinned by meticulous assessment. All staff have considerable expertise, establish warm relationships with children and motivate them to try hard. Children respond extremely well to the excellent curriculum which provides a wealth of engaging, practical activities, both indoors and in the stimulating and imaginatively designed outdoor area. The school's well established links with the children's centre and day nursery are central to the high quality care provided for children and their families.

The governing body is innovative and highly effective in supporting the school. It gains an accurate view of the school through a rigorous process of self-review. There is a strong ethos sense of pride but no complacency is evident in the approach of staff or governors. They question their effectiveness continuously. Further headway has been made since the school was judged outstanding in 2008, indicating an excellent capacity for sustained improvement. The school plays a central role in supporting children, parents and carers in the local community and provides advice and guidance for other settings. The school has identified a number of ways to extend this work further and is well placed to do so.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further extend the school's role as a centre of expertise in provision for young children and their families, by:

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- establishing further links and shared responsibilities across the school, children's centre and day nursery
- increasing the awareness in the local community of the wide range of expertise and experience that are available
- sharing good practice with other settings that provide for young children exploring the possibility of linking the school and children's centre buildings.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**

**1**

Children achieve well and really enjoy learning. Up to half of the children starting in the Nursery have had no pre-school experience. The general level of social and language development on entry is low. Early mathematical, creative and physical skills are also often limited. A few children are not toilet trained and find it difficult to leave their parents or carers. Due to the warm and sensitive approach of the staff, children settle down quickly. They soon take part happily in group activities, make friends and learn to follow the routines of school life. This was evident in the way that, following guidance from an adult, children chose fruit sensibly from the 'snack bar', washing their hands first and tidying up afterwards. Children participate eagerly in a wide range of physical activities, including aerobics, where they explained how exercise 'makes us strong'. Playing in the excellent outdoor area, children learn how to avoid mishaps, assess the risks involved in swinging from the climbing frame and how to negotiate a path through the small copse. Children's excellent cultural development is evident in the way they work and play together harmoniously with a great sense of belonging. This was seen as a small group, including children from Asian, Black African, Dutch and Eastern European backgrounds, eagerly contributed to a discussion about what they had been doing during the day.

With high quality and stimulating teaching, children make rapid progress across all areas of learning. At the end of their time in Nursery, most have reached the expected levels for their age. Progress in social development is particularly strong. A renewed emphasis on teaching children how sounds are represented by letters has paid dividends. After just one term in school, some children confidently identified the first letter of their name and other words, and their pretend writing included a few recognisable letters. Staff take every opportunity to engage children in counting activities which means children's early numeracy skills develop quickly. Working with a variety of construction materials, children learn about shapes and develop early problem solving skills as they make towers, buildings and bridges. Such experiences boost children's confidence and self-esteem and they become enthusiastic learners. The school sets challenging targets both for individuals and groups of children which are usually met. All children, including those recognised as gifted and talented and others with learning difficulties, such as poor speech and language skills, make outstanding progress.

*These are the grades for children's outcomes*

**Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

**1**

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b>	
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Children's attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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
<b>The extent to which children feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Children's behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Children's attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

On the first day of the inspection, almost half of the children were starting school for the first time. Due to the outstanding level of support offered by all the adults, the vast majority made an immediate start in the learning. The parents of the few children who were distressed at leaving them greatly appreciated the care shown by staff in inviting them to remain with their children, or observe from nearby, as school got underway. Each child is allocated to a 'key person' group, which includes children from across the age range. This is very effective in providing role models for the youngest children and opportunities for older children to offer support to the classmates. Using an excellent range of assessment methods, including observations, verbatim accounts and photographs, staff build up an excellent picture of children's emerging development and their individual needs. They use this information to plan the next steps in children's learning, striking a very good balance between tasks set by adults, activities from which children can choose and opportunities for children to follow their own ideas. Individual 'Learning Journey' booklets provide an excellent record of children's progress and also illustrate the wealth of activities the curriculum provides.

Underpinning the outstanding teaching and learning are the excellent relationships between adults and children, the highly stimulating curriculum and exceptional levels of care. Children behave exceptionally well as a result of very secure routines and clear expectations. Staff are highly skilled in gaining and sustaining children's attention. One

<sup>1</sup> 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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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

teacher held children spellbound as she engaged them in re-telling the story of Three Billy Goats Gruff. Children delighted in joining in with the narrative and were able to illustrate the sequence of events by using the model goats, troll and bridge the teacher had provided. Similarly, another group 'huffed and puffed' with great gusto as their teacher read expressively from a 'big book'. Children eagerly take up opportunities to use practical apparatus. After making their own boats, they tried floating them in the large water channel in the outdoor area. The teacher took every opportunity to seek their ideas, extend their thinking and develop key vocabulary such as 'float' and 'sink'. Other children, while exploring properties of clay, kneaded, banged and prodded it, added water and soon realised that the clay became more malleable.

Children's learning is greatly enhanced by the stimulating resources available indoors. All available space is used imaginatively to provide areas for creative and practical activities focussed on each area of learning. The area labelled for 'malleable materials', for example, was a hive of activity as children worked with play dough, clay, and damp sand, and hammered nails in wood using real tools. The spacious outdoor area includes extensive covered spaces to allow use in all weathers, a climbing frame, fixed large percussion instruments, a wide range of wheeled vehicles, a 'minibeast' enclosure, and a small copse, together with secluded areas and smaller play equipment. The accounts by staff about their exchange visits to Baltimore, and by parents about their cultural traditions, enhance children's understanding of the world outside home and school. Their understanding of cultural diversity is also supported well as they celebrate religious festivals, play African drums and help to cook traditional food.

Family learning and support are exceptionally well developed and are strong features of children's care. All staff provide very good support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities because they know exactly how to support the next steps in their learning. This is exemplified in their work with the 'enrichment' group, where around ten children benefit from highly skilled support. This fosters their self-esteem and enables them to make excellent progress in their social and language development. The use of Makaton (a signing system) by all staff helps them to communicate with children at the very early stages of language development.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

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

All members of staff, including teachers, early-years practitioners and support staff, willingly take on extra responsibilities. This means that everyone is focused on driving improvements. There is an excellent team spirit and shared determination to ensure all children get the best start possible to their education. The headteacher plays a pivotal role in encouraging and empowering staff to try out new ideas, at the same time keeping a close eye on their work, sharing things that work well and facilitating further training when appropriate.

Governors keep a sharp eye on assessment information and are quick to question any fluctuations or explore any emerging trends, reflecting the school's strong commitment to equal opportunities and determination to quickly spot and eradicate any discrepancy in the achievement of different groups. Governors keep themselves informed by visiting regularly, consulting parents and inviting staff members to their meetings. Governing body members have a wide range of experience including consultancy in early years education, child care and curriculum planning. This expertise is used extremely well in supporting the school and holding it to account. The governing body ensures that policies for the safeguarding of pupils are implemented highly effectively by regularly reviewing the compliance with regulations, undertaking risk assessments and ensuring that child protection policies are implemented extremely well.

Community cohesion is central to the school's ethos and is an inextricable aspect of its day to day life. Working in close partnership with the children's centre and day nursery, the school provides an invaluable resource for children and their families. It is keen to extend this work to increase local awareness of all that is provided. The two buildings are separate at the moment, which constrains communication a little. Children's understanding of the wider world is promoted well and all adults provide a clear example of mutual respect, where everyone's contributions are valued. The school is highly successful in engaging parents in their children's education. Parents paid tribute to the induction process, the welcome they receive from the teaching and office staff, and the quality of the school's newsletters and other information. Communication with working parents has been strengthened by the imaginative use of a system involving cards with removable symbols. These indicate in pictorial form what their children have been doing during the day and highlight any more detailed messages that may have been included in the home/school bag.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>



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<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	1
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	1
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	1

### **Views of parents and carers**

Almost all of questionnaires were entirely positive in their views of the school. All parents felt their children enjoyed school and were happy with their children's overall experience. The concerns expressed by a very few parents did not reflect the general view.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Ludwick 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 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 149 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	78	14	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	70	17	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	62	20	32	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	57	19	30	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	39	62	23	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	51	25	40	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	57	25	40	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)	31	49	20	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	67	18	29	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	48	28	44	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	56	21	33	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	42	67	18	29	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	71	17	27	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



23 September 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Ludwick Nursery School, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3RP

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed watching you work and play happily together. You get on well with one another and with all the adults.

The school is providing you with an outstanding education. You really enjoy learning because your teachers make sure you have many exciting things to do. It was great to see some of you making boats and trying them out in the water chute. We also saw how much the older children looked after those that had just started and made them feel welcome.

The adults care for you extremely well and help you if you have problems. Those in charge of the school are working really hard to make it even better. We think they have some great ideas that they could share with other schools.

We are sure you will keep on making great progress and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Rob Crompton

Lead inspector

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