

The Lawns Nursery School

The Baulk, Biggleswade, SG18 0PT

Inspection dates

2–3 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Children achieve exceptionally well in this welcoming nursery. Their progress is equally outstanding in every area of their learning.
- Teachers provide a very wide range of activities and tasks that are stimulating, fun and very well matched to children's individual needs and interests.
- They take every opportunity to ask children probing questions to check their understanding and make them think hard. This promotes children's curiosity and a love of learning.
- Children who find learning difficult are exceptionally well supported. Their needs are identified quickly, and the extra help they receive makes sure they achieve equally as well as the other children.
- Children behave exceptionally well and feel very safe. They run into school eager to learn.
- The headteacher, staff and governing body are very effective in continually checking to make sure the environment remains caring and supportive. Consequently, all children are given the very best start to their education.
- As a result of excellent leadership, the quality of teaching is outstanding.
- Staff have high expectations for what the children can achieve, and closely track their progress to make sure no-one falls behind in their learning. An electronic system has recently been introduced to make this even better, but it is not yet fully effective.
- The school's leaders and governors have a very good awareness of its strengths and weaknesses. Effective systems to raise the quality of teaching have contributed to the many ways in which the school has improved since its last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a wide range of nursery activities, including play opportunities children had chosen themselves and also small group sessions led by teachers. The inspector also carried out two observations with the headteacher.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including the school development plan, documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, the school's own data on children's current progress, checks on the quality of teaching, and teachers' planning.
- The inspector spent time with individual children, looking at and talking to them about their 'learning journey' books, which maintain a record of their achievements, as well as reading with individual children.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, staff, governors and several parents. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took into account the views expressed in the 19 completed staff questionnaires.
- There were only a very small number of responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View). The inspector took into account the recent survey the school had carried out to gauge the views of parents.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This average-sized nursery school provides morning and afternoon sessions, and admits children following their third birthday. Parents and carers can choose from these sessions.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs supported at early years action is average. The proportion supported at early years action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is also broadly average.
- Most children are from White British backgrounds with a few from a range of minority ethnic families. Most speak English as their first language.
- A children's centre shares the school site, and provides services to the local community. Although it is managed by the governing body and the headteacher, it is subject to a separate inspection and the latest report can be viewed on the Ofsted website at www.ofsted.gov.uk.
- Since the last inspection, the headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body have been appointed and the school has moved into purpose-built accommodation in a large landscaped woodland area and gardens.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure the new electronic tracking, assessment and reporting system is fully effective in strengthening links between home and supporting outstanding learning for all children.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- When children start school, their skills vary but are often well below those expected for their age. As a result of high-quality teaching, all children make excellent progress and leave with skills that are much closer to expected levels for their age group. Some develop skills that go beyond the levels typically expected at the start of the Reception Year.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs also make very good progress. The school makes sure that these children each get exactly the support they need through high-quality help and guidance from the staff and other professionals such as therapists as needed.
- Staff place great importance on developing children's speaking and listening skills. They are highly skilled in giving children time to respond to the questions they ask to extend their language. The wide variety of books displayed around the nursery encourage children's love of reading. The activities and tasks seen during the inspection were planned around *Mr Gumpy's Outing*. Children were holding tea parties, making boats and going on hunts to find the animals in the story. Children hold books correctly and talk confidently about what they see in the pictures.
- The teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is a regular focus of the school's work. Children are increasingly skilled at sounding out unknown words as they get older, and the more-able children confidently read and spell simple words correctly. The school keeps meticulous reading records to track the progress made by children who take books home from the nursery library to share with their parents. Children are learning to write and have lots of fun making marks with a wide range of interesting materials. Staff pay particularly close attention to making sure that children develop their fine motor skills so they are able to hold pencils and pens correctly.
- The school promotes an understanding of mathematical concepts very well as part of the children's daily routine. They count accurately and some use mathematical language and ideas as they play. For example, children enjoy playing number games with staff, singing number songs, identifying shapes and counting the number of children who are present when the register is taken. Children have many exciting opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills. For example, when playing outdoors, children were asked to hunt for numbered pictures.
- Children take full advantage of the wonderful woodland setting, which enables them to follow trails, concoct 'lunch' in the mud kitchen, plant in the garden, play 'hide and seek' and ride tricycles. Children use varied tools and equipment safely and with control. They move without fuss from their choice of activity to tidy up or get ready for group work or story time. Children are very confident, keen to learn and extremely independent.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Staff work seamlessly as a team. They regularly assess children's progress and share the resulting information to make sure their planning of activities is based precisely on what children need to learn next. Consequently, these activities are very well matched to the needs and interests of each child and all, whatever their starting points, make and sustain excellent progress.
- Staff make good use of the time available for children to learn through play. They choose

materials and equipment that thoroughly interest children, encourage them to get involved and sustain their concentration. The high quality of equipment, toys and displays contributes to children's very successful learning.

- When children are playing, adults take advantage of every opportunity to extend their learning, especially in literacy and mathematics. For example, if there are not enough places for children to ride on the tricycles or bicycles there is a board for them to write their names on to 'book' their turn. They are encouraged to complete a register when they arrive using printed versions of their full names, and to count how many have arrived. Throughout the sessions, putting names on their work is always encouraged and expected.
- In addition to the regular high-quality group work, there are sessions during which adults teach skills such as phonics or number work. Adults' use of questions to extend children's thinking and communication skills is especially good.
- A great strength of the nursery is the quality of the learning environment, both indoors and outside. The outdoor area with extensive woods is exceptionally well designed. Children take enormous pleasure in the time they spend outside, following clues on well-laid trails, pushing wheelbarrows, building boats or constructing water ducts in the sand. Just as much fun is had inside, dressing up, playing musical instruments, developing computer skills or still life painting.
- Adults set excellent examples for children in the way they speak, their attention to detail and their caring attitudes to others, all of which are of the highest quality.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children are polite and well mannered, and behave exceptionally well. They have a very good awareness of right and wrong and the standards of behaviour expected of them. They have very positive attitudes to learning and show much pride in their work. They are able to concentrate for long periods, persevere with tasks and work cooperatively with others, for example to build towers from wooden blocks or make cakes together from play dough. This has a very positive impact on their social and emotional skills.
- Children listen very carefully to instructions, do as they are asked, share, cooperate and take turns. Children rarely fall out with each other because they are so busy in their play and with the many exciting activities provided. At the end of the time provided for children to choose what to do, staff play music. When children hear the signal, they know they have to stop what they are doing and go to their groups.
- Staff encourage children to take on responsibilities such as counting how many children are in their group or making sure there is enough for all when handing round the snack. They provide excellent guidance on how to keep safe and always emphasise the importance of washing hands before eating or after play.
- There is no hint of any bullying behaviour in the school. Children consistently show kindness to each other and make visitors to the setting feel welcome. Relationships are a real strength of the school, and children feel very safe and know they will be well looked after by staff if they are upset. Parents and staff supported these highly positive views, and expressed their confidence in the school to keep children safe.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- All staff and the governing body share the headteacher's determination to provide the very best for every child. The headteacher leads the school exceptionally well and has taken it through many changes, not least the upheaval of the rebuild and move to the new premises. Her expertise has ensured that the detailed plans to move the school forward are based on an accurate view of strengths and areas that need improvement. Staff morale is very high and the staff questionnaires show that staff are very proud to be working at the school.
- Since the last inspection, the senior members of staff have become more involved in sharing responsibility for judging the quality of teaching. The staff take every opportunity to learn from each other and from visits to other settings. For example, some teachers have spent a term in the local infant school to share skills and ensure continuity in children's learning as they get older.
- The arrangements for checking on the quality of teaching are thorough and effective. Training needs are very quickly identified to ensure that staff skills are continually updated and improved. Teachers' pay is linked appropriately to the progress that children are making
- The headteacher and staff have a very detailed picture of every child's progress. They meet regularly to review children's targets, and make sure help and guidance are quickly provided for any children at risk of underachieving. The school has recently introduced an electronic tracking and assessment system for recording children's progress, but has not yet made sure all staff are confident in making the most of it to sharpen links with parents and support children's learning.
- The school works very well in partnership with parents. It gives them many opportunities to find out more about the school and their children's learning. For example, it has produced helpful booklets to support early mathematical development, reading and awareness of letters and sounds at home, and expects the new electronic system to involve parents even more by giving them regular updates on their children's progress.
- The children enjoy a wealth of exciting opportunities for learning. The stunning outside area is used extensively, not only during the working week but also at weekends and in holiday times. For example, in the 'Dads' Forest School' the children make camp fires and build shelters with their fathers.
- The local authority provides suitably 'light touch' support to this outstanding school. It also uses the school as an exemplar of good practice for other nursery schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are well informed about the work of the school. They are very supportive and also challenging in their approach, because they want to make sure that the very best opportunities are provided for the children. Their regular visits and monitoring activities give them a clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development. Training has enabled governors not only to fulfil their roles and responsibilities but also to be confident to ask searching questions about the school's performance. Governors are well aware of how staff performance is managed to improve the quality of teaching, and how the headteacher makes sure that the standards of teaching and learning are of the highest quality. They carry out their statutory safeguarding duties in line with good practice, and manage the school budget well.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	109414
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	401052

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bernard Briars
Headteacher	Valerie Ellar
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2010
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