

Inspection of Willow Nursery School

Goldstone Crescent, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 4QU

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 May 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Outstanding |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Outstanding |

What is it like to attend this school?

Children at Willow Nursery School are happy and confident. They settle quickly as soon as they arrive each day, thanks to carefully structured routines. Children thrive in the school's calm, safe, well-ordered environment.

Children love learning. They embrace the activities staff carefully plan for them with great enthusiasm. They love rooting around in a 'dinosaur swamp', hunting for bugs in the nursery garden or exploring the feeling of bubbly soap suds.

The school's clear routines and expectations promote children's independence at an early age. Staff support children to manage their behaviour extremely well. Children understand the school rules. They do their best to follow these, often reminding each other of the schools' high expectations.

Relationships throughout the Nursery are warm and caring. Children develop strong bonds with their key workers. If anyone is unkind, children are quick to let staff know. They trust them to sort out any upsets.

Children benefit from the range of activities that enhance and enrich their learning. They celebrate a range of religious festivals throughout the year. They explore the area beyond the school gates on local walks. Children experience the thrill of watching chicks hatch and of holding them safely.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Since the last inspection, the school has made significant changes to its curriculum. The new curriculum identifies clear, ambitious aims for children to achieve by the time they leave. These are linked to the statutory framework for early years. They are also relevant to the school's individual community.

Curriculum plans detail clear steps to support children to build their knowledge over time. From these plans, staff design relevant and engaging learning activities. This helps children to typically secure their understanding of important knowledge. Curriculum leaders have secure subject knowledge of their individual areas of learning. However, the school is still refining how it checks the effectiveness of the curriculum. Curriculum leaders do not have a secure enough understanding of how individual areas of learning link together. This means they are not as clear on where they need to make improvements as they might be.

Children learn through a combination of adult-led and child-initiated sessions. During child-initiated play, staff interact with children to move their learning on. Many of these interactions are of a high quality. Staff use skilful questioning, based on their knowledge of the child. They reinforce key vocabulary, encouraging children to use it in their play. This supports children's progress. However, some interactions with children are not as sharply focused. When this is the case, opportunities to address misconceptions or extend children's learning are missed. This means that children do

not always secure as deep an understanding of important knowledge as the school expects them to.

Stories, songs and rhymes support children to develop important language. Staff model the correct use of language. They encourage children to talk about their learning. Staff use visual resources effectively to support children who are in the early stages of language development. This includes those whose spoken English is still emerging. High quality books underpin the curriculum and promote a love of reading. Older children have effective, structured phonics sessions. This helps prepare them for learning to read.

Staff know the children extremely well. They use this knowledge to adapt learning activities to meet children's interests and needs. The school has strengthened its systems for supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school identifies the needs of children with SEND quickly. Where needed, provision is adapted so that children with SEND can achieve the aims of the curriculum. By the time they leave, most children are ready for their next stage of education.

Children's behaviour is exceptional. They share resources and take turns without question. They are sensitive to each other's feelings and often help each other. They concentrate well on the exciting activities adults set up for them. Many children show perseverance, even when things are challenging.

The school offers children a range of wider opportunities to build their confidence and broaden their horizons. These include meeting external visitors, performing a nativity show in front of an audience or making mince pies at Christmas. Children learn to understand diversity in an age-appropriate way. They celebrate the different cultures represented in their school community.

Governors have improved their understanding of the quality of education at the school. They have clear systems to check on the effectiveness of leaders' work. They ensure the school meets its statutory responsibilities. Staff feel very well looked after. They are unanimously supportive of leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are inconsistencies in the quality of interactions between staff and children. Sometimes, staff miss opportunities to address misconceptions, or reinforce key vocabulary. This means there are occasions where children do not learn as deeply as they could. The school should ensure that staff have the support and guidance

they need to use their interactions with children to address misconceptions and deepen learning.

- Curriculum leaders are still developing their understanding of the school's new curriculum and how their area fits into the bigger picture. This means the school does not have the information it needs on where improvements might be made. The school should ensure that curriculum leaders have the support they need to check their areas of responsibility. This is so they better understand where to make necessary improvements.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 109415 |
| Local authority | Central Bedfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10323588 |
| Type of school | Nursery |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 5 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 115 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | John Hassall |
| Headteacher | Leigh Davies |
| Website | www.willownursery.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 21 April 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Willow Nursery School admits children from the term after their second birthday.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account of their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, including the special educational needs co-ordinator. The lead inspector spoke with the chair of governors and with the school's improvement partner from the local authority on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these areas: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and understanding of the world. For

each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and children, and looked at children's work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and children; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation and policies. These included the school development plan and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's parent survey, Ofsted Parent View. They considered responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires. They also spoke with parents and staff to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Caroline Crozier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Steve Mellors

His Majesty's Inspector

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