

Lydalls Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122972
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	340249
Inspection dates	16-17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Christine Huard

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Williams
Headteacher	Claire White
Date of previous school inspection	18 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Observations were made of specialist group activities, including age-banded group activities, as well as the free flow activities taking place both indoors and outdoors. Inspectors observed all the Early Years staff assisting children in their learning. They spoke to parents and carers at the start and finish of the day and held meetings with governors and curriculum leaders. They discussed aspects of their work informally with many other members of staff. They observed the nursery's work in detail, and examined monitoring and assessment information, curriculum and development planning as well as monitoring records. Inspectors analysed 44 responses to questionnaires distributed to parents and carers and 19 returned by staff.

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

- the success of strategies to improve children's speaking and listening skills
- the success of activities such as Forest School and Chameleon Club, in building children's confidence and promoting their independence, and the impact these have on their learning
- how well the setting works with parents and carers in order to involve them more in their children's learning
- the quality of development planning and how the momentum for continuous improvement is sustained.

Information about the school

Lydalls is a small nursery with 110 children attending part-time. Ten of the places are designated for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The main areas of need are speech, language and communication, but there are children with moderate learning difficulties, behavioural difficulties and several who are on the autistic spectrum. Nearly all the children are of White British heritage and very few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The nursery is fully inclusive and all children learn together in the three main rooms and the outdoor areas. The Chameleon Club, which provides day care for children under three, has its own base, although children have full access to all the nursery's activities.

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

Lydalls provides an outstanding learning experience for all its children. It provides a range of stimulating and exciting activities in a rich and inspiring learning environment. As a result, children make excellent progress from their many and varied starting points. The school has further improved the outstanding practice identified at the last inspection. The primary reason for the school's success is the inspirational leadership and drive of the headteacher. She and all the staff care passionately about the education and development of all the children who attend. They are always looking for ways to improve further. Induction procedures are outstanding and ensure that every child settles quickly and develops excellent attitudes to learning. As a result, behaviour is excellent and learning takes place in a happy and harmonious atmosphere.

Children's needs are assessed even before they start at the nursery. Visits are made to every home and the information gleaned ensures that right from the start activities provided meet every child's needs and abilities. The Chameleon Club provides an excellent introduction to the nursery's activities and enables children to gain independence and confidence before starting nursery on a regular basis. Wide ranging assessments continue throughout every child's stay in nursery in order to sustain the high quality provision. Consequently, children make excellent progress and more able children make excellent strides forward in the same way as those with specific needs and difficulties.

The curriculum is rich and stimulating and the quality of teaching and support provided are extremely high. Particular emphasis has been placed on improving the provision for children's speech and language skills. A specific programme is being followed and the 'Spirals' and 'Opportunity' groups provide specific support for those who have difficulties with communication or who lack a certain degree of confidence. The activities provided stimulate and inspire the children and enable them to interact socially, practise their speaking and develop their language and vocabulary within a small group in a particularly positive and encouraging environment. Additional activities, such as the Forest School, further enhance children's learning particularly in the way they develop children's self-assurance and independence.

The care, guidance and support provided by the nursery are outstanding. Safeguarding procedures are robust and ensure that all groups of children are safe and secure. The nursery works extremely closely with parents and carers and a range of outside agencies to ensure that provision for children is at the optimum

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level. Parents appreciate this. They receive regular reports of their children's progress, are sent details of the exciting Forest School activities, and have regular meetings with their children's key workers. Children's 'learning diaries' and their scrapbooks are an accurate and exciting record of children's learning and development and parents and carers are invited to contribute to these by posting comments and contributions in the 'Share with us' box.

The recent change in the local authority admission arrangements to primary schools has necessitated some change in the way the nursery is run. The school continues to admit children in the term following their third birthday, but now has more children of this younger age group in school and for less time than previously as they may now move onto a primary school from the September after their fourth birthday. The school is in the process of carrying out a major review of its practice and procedures, but this will not be complete until the end of the year. Governors are fully involved in the strategic development of the school. The school's work is meticulously monitored, evaluated and, where necessary, adapted to ensure that children continue to receive the very best provision to enable them to continue to make outstanding progress in all areas of their development. The result is an outstanding nursery that is very well equipped for purpose. It has a staff with high morale and high levels of expertise who know that the service they provide is of a high order but who continually say, 'We can always' improve.' There is an exceptional capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Complete the current major review of practice and procedures. Use the information gained to ensure provision fully reflects the needs of the, now predominantly, younger age range and sustaining it at the current outstanding level.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**1**

Children love coming to the nursery and enjoy every minute they are there. There is an excellent emphasis on developing children's social skills when they first start so that all children are ready to learn and persevere with their learning. Staff know exactly how to target questions at the right level to move each child on in their learning. In an afternoon group session children were told the story of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, which supported their work on mini-beasts. In response to well-targeted questions, some were able to identify that it was night time because they had spotted the moon in the picture, others were able to identify the fruit, and more able children able to count and match numbers to the amount eaten. Because the story was told with appropriate props, children could see how the caterpillar grew, they were familiar with the fruit because real fruit was used and the whole story became real for them. Because the needs of every child are so well assessed, all make outstanding progress, and this includes those who are more able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attainment on leaving is

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significantly higher than that of most children of a similar age.

Staff seize every opportunity to develop children’s learning, whether it be how to stay safe in the sun or eating healthily at snack time. The children’s own interests are taken into account when developing themes and topics to make their learning more relevant. Drama and role play are used extensively particularly in the Forest School, where children excitedly acted the story of *Goldilocks*, learning important messages about how to keep themselves safe at the same time. Children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Children reflect on their learning during group time, celebrate festivals from other cultures and really enjoyed the visit of puppets, Jacques and Roger, from France and Spain with whom they now carry out a pen pal friendship. They have an excellent understanding of each other’s needs for ones so young and readily tidy up after each session sensibly and maturely. Despite the absence of formal rules, behaviour is excellent and all children fully understand what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and consideration for others. Attendance is excellent and the wide range of basic skills that they learn, prepare them extremely well for the future.

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	1
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	1
The extent of children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

A wide range of exciting activities interest and motivate the children. The excellent relationships and partnerships the nursery has established in the area enables children to experience, for example, regular access to woodworking thanks to a

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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neighbouring wood yard. They use real tools and learn how to use them correctly. Teaching is never predictable. For example, in clear contrast to the bustle of the workshop, a silence stole across the rooms as a harpist played for the children, enabling them to appreciate live music and the atmosphere it can create. They discovered that working cooperatively to fill wheelbarrows and buckets to transport soil to the planting beds made the task much easier, and staff made sure the children understood how to manoeuvre and tip the wheel barrows correctly so they did not lose the soil en route. They learned a variety of mathematical language. Questions were well targeted so that some could say 'it's heavy', whilst others were able to say 'this bucket is heavier than that one'. All these activities ensured that all children, whatever their ability, received the support or challenge they needed to further their development. Staff are highly trained in order to provide for the many and differing needs of the children. Work in small groups ensures that children with delayed speech are helped to develop this skill and staff are accomplished at signing and questioning. Staff observe children carefully and record their development diligently. This occurs across all areas of learning so their records are comprehensive. The quality of care, guidance and support is exceptionally high. The welfare needs of all children are met extremely well. Transition arrangements into and out of the nursery school are of high quality. The school has excellent relationships with primary schools in the partnership and if extra visits are needed to ensure a smooth transition for children these are arranged.

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?

The headteacher has a clear vision for the future which is shared by all staff. Although found to be outstanding at the last inspection, there have been significant improvements since then in terms of provision and development of staff expertise. This is testament to the commitment and dedication of all to further improvement. Governors ensure that children are safe and secure. At the time of the inspection all safeguarding and child protection procedures were robust and statutory requirements were fully met. Governors are extremely supportive, have an excellent knowledge of the nursery's strengths but challenge it constructively. They monitor the work of the nursery rigorously and are fully involved in decision making. They ensure that there are equal opportunities for every child and that there is no discrimination. As a result, all children achieve equally well. The nursery has excellent relationships with parents, carers and the local community. There is a very clear

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understanding of community cohesion and the school has wide ranging links and resources which help to extend children's understanding of other cultures.

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	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

There were 44 responses to the questionnaires. The inspector spoke to several parents and carers before and after sessions who were extremely positive and exceptionally supportive of the school. The many positive comments often refer to the excellent leadership of the headteacher and the dedication of the staff. 'The staff are passionate about the children and never lose sight of the children's best interests. All this is possible because it is led by a truly talented headteacher.' Many parents and carers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities commented about the support they receive, one saying, 'Lydalls has been fantastic in supporting my child's learning and the individual education plan has been extremely effective.' Another said, 'The nursery is a fantastic setting; my son has blossomed because of his environment.' One comment summarised the views of many. 'Excellent nursery, fantastic dedicated staff. The best possible start for my child.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Lydalls 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 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 110 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	80	9	20	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	84	6	14	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	64	14	32	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	66	15	34	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	34	77	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	80	9	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	75	11	25	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)	24	55	16	36	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	70	13	30	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	61	16	36	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	68	13	30	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	35	80	9	20	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	82	8	18	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 all 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.



18 June 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Lydalls Nursery School, Didcot OX11 7HX

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really loved seeing you so happy and enjoying all the wonderful things to do and learn. You have a wonderful nursery with a fabulous garden and outside area. I was very impressed with the way you helped to get the new beds ready for planting. You learned to manage the wheelbarrows very well and learned lots of new language as well. This letter is to tell you some of the things we found out.

- You go to an outstanding nursery. All the adults give you exactly the help you need to help you learn really well.
- You behave really well and you play very happily with each other. You make yourselves useful and always help to tidy up each day.
- You all really enjoy the activities that are provided for you. You really seemed to enjoy playing outside.
- All the adults look after you exceptionally well and keep you safe.
- Your headteacher keeps everything running exceptionally well and everyone enjoys working and learning at Lydalls because it is such a happy and well organised place to be.

Now that some of you are able to go to your next school a bit sooner than children used to we have asked the leaders to make sure that the things they give you to do are at exactly the right level for you to be able to tackle really confidently. You can help by always doing your very best.

Thank you again for making my time at Lydalls so happy.

Yours sincerely

Christine Huard
Lead inspector

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