

Ludwick Nursery School

Holwell Road, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3RP

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- The achievement of all children is outstanding. Regardless of their starting points, or any barriers to learning, each child receives the care and support he or she needs to make excellent progress.
- There is outstanding provision of a wide range of activities for all children. They choose tasks where they work on their own that are also linked to their interests at home.
- Outstanding teaching enables children to develop excellent social skills and a growing self-reliance. The highly skilled staff ensure that learning is interesting, challenging and fun. This develops children's ability to find things out for themselves and their obvious enjoyment of learning.
- Outstanding leadership, excellent links with the onsite nursery and children's centre and the unstinting dedication and commitment of all staff enable the school to prepare children extremely well for the next stage in their education.
- Exceptionally strong partnerships with parents and carers are the bed-rock of children's learning in this nursery. The 'hopes and dreams' board in the entrance, which contains parental expectations and ideas of children's achievements, is a testament to this trusting relationship.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding and children have excellent relationships with the adults in the nursery. The care and support provided by the school are exemplary and held in high regard by parents. A sensitively-judged emphasis on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is inspired by an imaginative range of topics and themes.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs receive high quality support enabling their full inclusion in school life.
- The headteacher's inspirational leadership is fundamental to the success of the school. There is a very strong commitment to develop staff and to nurture talent.
- The school has made good use of sharing its expertise with other early years institutions since the last inspection, and seeks to extend its net still wider.
- Leaders and governors have been successful in maintaining the outstanding features noted at the previous inspection and have improved teaching and children's achievement. They share the clear direction for the development of the school and all see the full potential in each and every child.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed children learning in a wide range of activities, including those they had chosen for themselves, and others led by adults, including small group work. Nine learning sessions were observed, several of these jointly with the headteacher and the senior teacher. The inspector spoke with children about their learning and also looked at lunch-time arrangements. Displays and records of children's work were examined.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at progress and attainment data, the school's development plan, curriculum plans, documentation from the governing body, notes on the checks made on the quality of teaching, arrangements for safeguarding and the promotion of attendance, as well as some of the children's learning journeys.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of staff with specific responsibilities and representatives of the governing body. The inspector spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 79 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and the results of the school's consultation with parents. The inspector spoke to a number of parents who stayed to see their children settle into the nursery, as well as holding a meeting with a group of parents and carers who contributed their views.
- Questionnaires completed by 20 members of the school staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average size nursery school which provides part-time places for children in morning and afternoon sessions.
- Most children stay at the nursery for a year, starting when they are just three years of age, and leave at the age of four. A small number of children stay for more than a year.
- Most children join the school in the autumn term. Most attend either in the morning or the afternoon and a small number of children access sessions on a flexible basis. Children have the opportunity to join in with the optional lunch club and wraparound day care.
- The large majority of children are of White British heritage, with a minority of children from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. A very small number of children speak English as an additional language. This varies from year to year.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs who are supported through Early Years Action is above that found in most schools. The proportion supported at Early Years Action Plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is well above that found in schools nationally. The school is a leading Early Years Specialist Development Centre for children (0-3) with complex additional needs, and their families and provides Enrichment Group for children with severe communication needs.
- The headteacher has been a Professional Partner advising schools nationally and is a National Leader in Education. The school developed the Early Years Specialist Leaders of Education programme and is a currently a National Support School.
- The school shares the site with a children's centre which is managed by the governing body. The children's centre provides a wide range of services. These services are subject to a separate inspection. There is a private day nursery on site, which is also subject to a separate inspection. The school now provides support for two-year olds and this is subject to a separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the current good work to extend further the role of the school in supporting and sharing outstanding practice at both local and wider levels.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children join the nursery with skills that are below the levels expected for their ages, especially in their personal and social skills, and communication and language. The excellent links between home and school enable them to settle quickly and happily into school. As a result of very high-quality teaching and excellent adult support, high expectations and a first-class partnership with parents, a far larger-than-expected proportion of children attain expected and above expected levels by the time they join Reception.
- There is an excellent focus on the early development of children's skills for reading. They are encouraged to read books and there is an emphasis on accessing them easily by placing them in strategic locations throughout the nursery. To supplement the daily book bag, parents have set up a lending library in the family room. All this contributes very positively to raising achievement even further across the different areas of learning. Regular use of traditional stories and the singing of nursery rhymes make learning fun and add to the children's interest in words, sounds, and rhyme.
- Learning is also supported by excellent displays of children's creative work, mark-making and photographs. Activities are imaginative, purposeful and relevant so that children know what they are learning and why. Staff seize on every opportunity to develop language and widen children's vocabulary. The more able children are given further challenging work to extend their skills and as a consequence they also make outstanding progress.
- When making salt dough to create Christmas decorations, the children's mathematical development was enhanced by following the recipe and investigating how many cups they had put in and whether the cups were full enough. In addition, they were encouraged to explore whether the dough was wet enough and how much flour they might need to sprinkle on the boards to stop it sticking as they rolled it out.
- Children enjoy the range of mark-making and writing activities provided. Many children are able to identify their own name and name several letters and the sounds that they make. Some children are now able to write their own name. New technology enables children to develop further their hand control by making shapes and marks which lead on to creating recognisable letters and numbers.
- Children develop very good levels of physical development as they climb, balance, ride bikes and trikes with skill and agility. They gain good dexterity in using paintbrushes to paint and design patterns. This was observed when children were greatly enjoying making Christmas lanterns for the school performance.
- Disabled children, those who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are supported extremely well. They make outstanding progress because of the expert provision and experience of the staff. The strong partnership with the adjoining day nursery ensures continuity of care and provision for such children, and especially for those identified with speech, language and communication difficulties in the enrichment group.
- Equality of opportunity is clearly demonstrated by the way the setting cares well for all its children and offers them the same degree of challenge and high expectation, and ensures that there is no discrimination.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching across the nursery is of a consistently very high quality. All adults have very high expectations of children. Early literacy and mathematical skills are taught and practised exceptionally well so that children are very well equipped for their future. Outstanding teaching and support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs ensure that they make the same progress as their peers.
- Children arrive at each session full of excitement, looking forward to exploring the highly stimulating range of activities on offer. An excellent range of adult-led activities promote all aspects of learning. They are complemented by meticulously planned activities to encourage children to learn through play and to find things out for themselves. .
- Adults skilfully promote communication and language, sounding out new letters, words or numbers. They encourage children's development in all aspects exceptionally well because staff talk to children about everything. During a cooking session when children were making pastry for mince pies, they were excitedly describing the texture and feel of the mixture. The teacher was an excellent role model as she encouraged language development in an imaginative and relevant way.
- All the adults who teach use assessment information well to plan activities that are interesting, inspiring and tailored to children's needs and interests. During one session, children were exploring the smells and tastes of Christmas. They used a wide range of skills as they took turns to describe the smell of spices and the taste of stuffing and mince pies, and found out how to peel satsumas. They quickly learnt in a well-structured and memorable way so that they made outstanding progress.
- The outside area is used exceptionally well to encourage children's independent investigative skills and their physical development. They learn to share and take turns as well as improving their coordination and physical development. Children also benefit from high quality sessions of yoga, which helps them to be calm, develop control of their bodies and gain confidence.
- Children's achievements are shared effectively with families through individual achievement records (learning journeys). These help make children's learning visible for parents and carers and identify how they may encourage contributions from their children, and the features of successful learning. Families appreciate that they are active partners in their children's education.
- The headteacher and staff are strong on team-building. Staff are all seen as being as important as each other in the support of children's learning. Consequently, the school is very effective in the ways it plans activities and opportunities for learning in a supportive and enriching environment.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour and safety are outstanding because children quickly develop self-confidence and are enabled to develop their independent and social skills very well. Excellent relationships between adults and children, and between the children themselves mean that they learn in a positive and supportive environment, where each individual's views are valued and children feel listened to.
- Children receive outstanding care and support which makes an exceptionally strong contribution to the way they thrive and make excellent progress in all areas of learning.

- Children have outstanding attitudes to learning, look out for each other and work together very well. An example of very productive cooperation between children was seen in the cooking activity when one child offered to help another roll out the pastry. Children demonstrate high levels of perseverance, when working on their own or in groups.
- Children requiring additional support for a disability or with special educational needs settle very well and enjoy all aspects of school life. There are excellent partnerships with experts from education, health and welfare and as a result these children make outstanding progress in their learning.
- Staff are vigilant and manage behaviour calmly and patiently. They talk about appropriate behaviour with children to reinforce positive messages. As a result, there are no bullying or racist incidents.
- The school works closely with families to stress the value of their children coming to school regularly. They communicate early with parents in the induction booklet explaining to them about not taking holidays during term time and the importance of children coming to the nursery on time. Most children attend regularly which reflects a strong partnership between home and school.
- The school has excellent procedures to keep children safe and parents feel very strongly that the school keeps their children safe. They appreciate the way they and their children are welcomed personally each day by the headteacher. A well-established programme of home visits, before children start at the school, helps children settle quickly into school life.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school has maintained the outstanding outcomes noted in the previous inspection because of the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, the dedication of the staff and strong leadership by the governing body. Senior leaders and governors have an in-depth understanding of the school's strengths and areas where they can improve further.
- The headteacher checks the teaching quality regularly. The outcomes, coupled with regular appraisals, set exacting targets for performance. These are linked to effective strategies to promote teachers' professional development and many staff have gained additional professional qualifications since joining the school.
- Staff at all levels have the skills to observe and assess children's development accurately. There is a climate of continual improvement among the staff, who plan activities and experiences relevant to the children's developmental needs and skilfully support and challenge their development. Consequently, all children make excellent progress.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well throughout the school. Families from different religious or ethnic backgrounds are invited to share their cultures with the nursery, for example, through story telling in Polish and in the singing of Indonesian folk songs in the recently held 'International Week'. The nursery is highly successful in engaging parents to participate in their children's learning by keeping them well-informed and making them feel welcome in the school.
- The school tracks the progress of individuals in detail to identify any underachievement early and put in place effective support. This tracking also looks at the progress of different groups to

make sure that they are making the best possible progress.

■ The nursery has excellent working partnerships with other professionals particularly through the children's centre. Continuous excellence in the school's leadership and management was acknowledged in July 2013 when the headteacher and staff became one of the schools recognised by the Department for Education as a National Leader in Education. This is part of a network of outstanding schools across the country, and this represents good improvement since the last inspection. The management team is keen to develop the nursery's profile in the area and continue to use its outstanding practice to support other schools and settings in improving early years education.

■ Monitoring by the local authority is 'light touch' only as the school is recognised as a centre of excellence.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– Governors are thorough in performing their legal duties, including meeting all the requirements for safeguarding and the vetting of staff. They visit the school regularly and effectively use their individual skills to ask searching questions and hold the senior leaders to account. Governors are aware of the quality of teaching and take positive decisions to maintain its excellence. Systems to manage the performance of staff, including the headteacher's appraisal, are clear and contribute to the excellence of the provision. Governors are passionate about giving the best possible education to the children and know how to check this by using information about children's progress. Governors manage financial resources well, making sure that money is spent wisely to support children. For example, together with the headteacher they have recently improved the use of the building by extending facilities between the children's centre and the nursery.

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	117079
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425189

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	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Birleson
Headteacher	Karen James
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2010
Telephone number	01707 323693
Email address	admin@ludwick.herts.sch.uk

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