

# Muriel Green Nursery School

Church Crescent, St Albans, AL3 5JB

## Inspection dates

2–3 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher has worked effectively to remove the weaknesses identified when the school was judged inadequate. Her ambition to provide all children with a well-rounded start to their education is realised by an increasingly skilled and enthusiastic staff team.
- The governing body has good processes to enable it to hold the school to account. Children's well-being and education are at the heart of the school's policies. Governors make regular checks to ensure the policies are implemented well and have a positive impact on children's progress.
- Good-quality teaching is enabling children to learn new skills rapidly. Staff have high expectations for what children are able to achieve.
- Teaching provides children with memorable experiences which they recount enthusiastically to visitors and at home. Staff listen carefully to children, giving them time to respond to questions and encouraging them to use new vocabulary. This supports their good progress.
- Children's achievement is good. Most move on to primary school with levels of development that are typical and above for their age.
- Children are safe and secure at Muriel Green. They behave well. Parents who spoke to the inspector were positive about their children's experiences; they said their children make good friends at the nursery.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Assessment, although accurate, is not always used well enough to plan what children need to learn next, particularly where a child has an area of development below what is typical for their age.
- Partnerships with local primary schools are at an early stage of development.
- Partnership working between the day-care nursery on the same site and the nursery school is not strong enough. Although children who attend both the day-care and nursery school remain in the same classroom all day, staff do not plan activities for the whole day together to build on what children are learning in both settings. This slows their progress.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and staff, the governing body, a representative from the local authority and the National Leader of Education who has been supporting the school.
- The inspector took account of the 25 responses on the online Parent View survey and spoke to parents about their views.
- The inspector looked at displays of children's work, their learning journals and observed teaching, both indoors and outdoors.
- The inspector visited the day-care setting on the same site and spoke to children in both settings about their work and play.
- Evidence from the monitoring inspections in September 2013, April and July 2014 was also taken into account.

## Inspection team

Gill Jones, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.*

### Information about this school

- Muriel Green Nursery is a much smaller than average-sized school.
- Children attend the nursery class for 15 hours a week. Many parents make use of the Muriel Green Nursery and Pre-school day-care for which they pay. Children who use both facilities may remain in the same classroom for up to ten hours a day. The wrap-around care provides children with breakfast, lunch and tea.
- Most children are White British. A very small proportion speak English as an additional language.
- No children have special educational needs.
- The school has been supported by the local authority and a National Leader for Education from Ludwick Nursery School since it was judged inadequate at its previous inspection.
- A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in September 2013. He stepped down to become Vice Chair in September 2014 and a new Chair was elected. A new headteacher started in January 2014. A new senior teacher joined the school part-time and several teaching staff have left the school.
- Muriel Green Nursery and Pre-school (day-care) is managed by the governing body of the school. It shares the same building, which is owned and managed by the local health authority. The pre-school and the nursery class have a shared entrance with children's health. This is managed by the health authority and the school contributes towards the cost of the receptionists.
- The day-care is registered by Ofsted and inspected separately. The nursery class and pre-school share some staff. Both the registered day-care and the nursery school are led and managed by the headteacher.

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

- Strengthen partnership working between the school and the day-care setting by:
  - sharing the existing good-quality teaching and assessment practice
  - planning activities together for children who attend both the pre-school and nursery class to ensure consistency in expectations for their progress and development.
- Strengthen partnership work in checking the accuracy of assessments with local schools to ensure that transition enables children to build on what they already know.
- Increase staff confidence in using assessment information more consistently to plan activities which will enable children to make rapid progress, particularly in their weaker areas of development.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is tenacious in the way she works systematically to improve the quality of children's education and care. She is building a strong staff team who are gaining a clear understanding of how to develop children's skills and abilities effectively. Her knowledge of young children's developmental needs is excellent and, because of this, staff trust her to make the right decisions for the future direction of the nursery.
- The headteacher demonstrates resilience in tackling difficult issues and has taken effective action to ensure that all staff meet the high standards she sets. Regular monitoring by the headteacher, who staff say is 'very visible', is having a huge impact on improving the quality of teaching and the classroom environment. She is clear about what needs to improve and shares this effectively with staff, who say they feel 'trusted and valued'.
- Local authority challenge and support to the governing body and school has been highly effective. The headteacher has made excellent use of support and challenge from the National Leader of Education recommended by the local authority. All staff are working with the equivalent staff at the National Leader's school and the impact of this on improving the curriculum and quality of teaching is high.
- Staff morale is positive. Support staff have recently increased the level of responsibility they take for children's learning and development. They are responding well to the raised challenge. They appreciate observing the outstanding practice in the support school and are applying it well to their own work.

Staff with leadership responsibilities are rapidly improving the quality of the curriculum and the nursery environment. Together with the headteacher, they are ambitious to make improvements, but are sometimes frustrated in their plans because of the restrictions placed on them by the site contract with the health authority.

- Performance management is rigorous. Staff targets are driving rapid improvement to the quality of teaching and the curriculum. Information about children's progress is used effectively by the headteacher to identify necessary improvements and to hold staff to account.
- Partnerships with feeder primary schools are at an early stage of development. Individual assessment information is shared with the school that children transfer to but the nursery has not yet developed arrangements for working with receiving schools to confirm the accuracy of staff assessments. Most teachers from the receiving schools visit the children in the nursery.
- The outdoor area has been transformed to provide excellent learning experiences for the children. Governors report that this development is testimony to the headteacher's quiet determination and tenacity to get things done.
- The school promotes children's tolerance and respect for each other and for the environment. As part of their everyday routines, children are taught to be polite, take turns, share, treat resources well and to listen to each other. Individuals are valued and the school actively promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination effectively. The school prepares children well for life in modern Britain.
- The arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. Policies are up to date and child protection and staff recruitment arrangements are well known and understood by all staff and governors. Risk assessment is part of the daily routine carried out by all staff.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Since the last inspection, the governing body has transformed the way it works to ensure that it fully understands the work of the school. Governors have a good balance of professional skills and expertise which helps them to provide successful support and challenge.

- Governors have set up effective systems to monitor the quality of the school's work, making good use of performance data to hold the school's leaders to account. They have taken robust action to employ and retain skilled staff, and reward performance appropriately.
- Rigorous checks on policies by nominated governors ensure that procedures are properly followed. In this way, the governing body safeguards the health, safety and well-being of the children well.
- The governing body manages the additional complexities of the day-care provision well and is working effectively to ensure that quality is comparable across the school and day-care. Governors are keen to improve the contractual site arrangements which limit how the school can use the building, but this remains work in progress.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Children are attentive and eager to learn. They sustain concentration well. For example, in a lesson on phonics (letters and sounds), children took turns in a small group to sound out words correctly by watching, listening and learning from the teacher and each other.
- Children are friendly to visitors and engage them well in their play and conversation. They show concern for each other and willingly help their friends. On occasions when they have done something wrong, they show remorse.
- Where children find it difficult to relate to others, staff teach them the skills they need. The ethos in the nursery helps children to learn to control their behaviour well. Consequently, children play in a calm and purposeful way.
- Attendance at the nursery is good. Flexible arrangements mean parents can use the 15 hours free entitlement to suit their working patterns.

### **Safety**

- The nursery's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Staff teach children to use equipment sensibly and to put things away once they have finished playing. Consequently, the indoor and outdoor areas are tidy and clean.
- Children move sensibly around the school and listen to instructions from staff carefully. On the regular 'welly walk' to the local park, wearing their high visibility jackets, they happily stay close to their key worker, keeping within the boundaries set by staff.
- Parents spoken to by the inspector say the school cares for their children well. One parent spoke of the regular medication her son requires and how she is confident to rely on the nursery to administer it safely according to her wishes.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has been transformed. Teaching is now lively and engaging.
- Staff introduce interesting activities to capture children's natural inquisitiveness, encouraging their thirst for learning. For example, children took great pride in baking their own Christmas cakes and icing them, recounting the ingredients and method for the inspector.
- The classroom is well managed and organised. Staff's high expectations of what children can achieve are evident both indoors and outdoors.
- Staff explain tasks clearly to children and ensure their good achievement by teaching the required skills. For example, in the mud kitchen, a child was struggling to put the mud from his spade into a bucket; the

teacher demonstrated it and helped him to alter his grip on the spade to enable success. Such attention to detail is becoming common practice by staff across all aspects of the curriculum.

- Teaching of communication, language and phonics are good, aided by the staff's use of Standard English at all times. Children enjoy story time and singing because the staff lead these sessions enthusiastically, reading with clarity and expression.
- Information about children's learning is used by staff effectively to improve teaching. For example, mathematical development is being given greater emphasis in the classroom and outdoors to ensure that children achieve as well in this area as they do in communication and literacy.
- Staff work effectively with parents to support children's progress, though they recognise this is at an early stage of development. Initiatives such as 'magic moments' celebrate children's achievements, both in and outside school, and this is helping to build stronger relationships. Encouraging children to take library books home and the daily book browsing sessions in the classroom have a good impact on developing children's love of reading.
- Assessments of individual children's skills, knowledge and abilities are accurate. Written observations of children's learning are variable in quality, but the support provided by senior staff is improving staff skills.
- Staff take pride in their work. All staff plan activities for children and complete learning journals well. However, this is a new development for most, so their confidence in linking what children need to learn next to written assessments is relatively low. Consequently, some children who start the nursery with an area of development below that typical for their age are not supported sufficiently to make rapid progress in that area.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children start Muriel Green with skills and abilities that are at least typical for their age. Some are highly articulate and already able to read simple phonically regular words. This term, children have made good progress, particularly those who are learning to speak English as an additional language.
- Recent improvements to the quality of teaching and the curriculum have made a significant difference to children's achievement, which is now good. Children enjoy regular cookery, 'welly walks', the mud kitchen and story den. Rich practical experiences are helping children to develop their mental recall and vocabulary by providing interesting things to talk about.
- Children's personal development is good. Most are able to put on their own coats, gloves, hats and wellingtons to play outdoors. They hang their belongings on pegs when they enter the nursery and match their photograph to their name when starting the day.
- Children take pride in their achievements, which are evident in their learning journals and displayed in the classroom. They happily discussed pictures of themselves with the inspector, recounting memorable moments with enthusiasm.
- A good emphasis on developing early literacy and mathematical skills is leading to children being well prepared for the start of primary school. Children are attentive to the teacher during daily small-group sessions and they sustain a good level of concentration.
- High-attaining children achieve well. They are encouraged by staff to develop skills in areas where they are less secure, ensuring they leave the nursery as confident learners.
- The nursery tracks children's progress well. Opportunities for children to practise new skills are provided systematically, and staff ensure that children engage in a range of activities each day. As a result, children achieve well across all areas of learning. However, where an individual child has a specific area of development below that typical for their age, the rate of progress in that area is not always rapid enough for them to catch up.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133975
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	447398

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<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>	35
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Mackenny
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen Ashton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16–17 July 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01727 891109
<b>Fax number</b>	N/A
<b>Email address</b>	admin@murielgreen.herts.sch.uk



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