

# Phoenix Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104281
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	355552
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Best

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	55
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Narinder Reehal
<b>Headteacher</b>	Brigitte Baxter
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	31 October 2007
<b>School address</b>	Phoenix Street Blakenhall, Wolverhampton WV2 3JS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01902 558126
<b>Fax number</b>	01902 558126
<b>Email address</b>	phoenixnurseryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who observed 10 sessions involving two teachers and five classroom support staff. Discussions were held with children, parents, staff, members of the governing body, and representatives of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at safeguarding documentation, assessment records, the school's improvement plan and children's work. In addition, seven staff questionnaires and 27 parental questionnaires were analysed.

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

- How well do different groups of children make progress, particularly the more-able?
- How effectively does teachers' planning draw on information about what children know and can do, and how well is this planning implemented?
- How accurate is the school's evaluation of its work in informing its priorities for development?

## Information about the school

This average size nursery serves an area where many families live in rented accommodation. It provides up to 80 part-time morning and afternoon places during term time only. No child is eligible for free school meals as the provision is part-time. A high proportion of children join the nursery other than at the usual times.

Almost 80% of children are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups, with those from an Indian heritage forming the main group. Just over 60% of children speak English as an additional language and about half of these are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of children with special educational needs is higher than found in similar schools but none have statements for their special needs. All of these proportions are higher than at the time of the last inspection.

The nursery admits children from the age of 2 years 9 months, which enables them to attend for up to six terms before moving on to Reception classes in local primary schools. The nursery's Basic Skills Award status was renewed in 2009.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school that provides well for its children and their families. Children make good progress from their starting points, especially in their personal, social and emotional development, where they make outstanding progress. This is because of the good quality of provision that is well focussed on children's needs, and the effectiveness of the leadership in establishing trusting and purposeful links with parents and carers, outside agencies and other schools. Parents and carers are highly satisfied with the provision the school makes. They are delighted with the, often rapid, progress their children make, especially in learning to speak English. One wrote: 'My son enjoys school and is always happy going there. I find the school staff very helpful, friendly and understanding.' Another commented: 'My child and I always get a warm welcome from the teachers.'

The success of the nursery's work is rooted in the good quality systems in place for assessing and recording what children know and can do, and the effective use of this information by staff to guide their planning of children's learning. Since the last inspection, staff have worked closely together and with colleagues in other nursery schools and classes, to improve the accuracy of their assessments and simplify the way in which this information is presented. As a result, children's needs are being more effectively met, for example in the challenge provided for the more-able. In addition, areas for development are also more promptly identified. For example, in the calculating element of mathematical development, the school's assessments rightly recognise that children are making slower progress compared with other areas.

Teaching is good and is effectively supported by a varied and interesting curriculum that focuses on exploration, investigation, imagination and reflection across the six areas of learning. Effective use is made of both the inside and outside areas, and good quality learning resources are well used. Staff expertise, particularly in community languages, enhances children's acquisition and understanding of English, and strengthens links with parents and carers. Children's behaviour is good and most attend regularly. They say they feel safe and secure because of the good quality care, support and welfare staff provide. Children enjoy the established routines and develop a good understanding of working together, for example when taking responsibility for tidying up. Time is usually well used but when too many adult-led activities take place at the same time, the pace of learning flags and children's concentration wanes because some of these activities finish before others.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher's dedication and commitment to the children is fully reflected by all members of the staff team in their day-to-day work. The good quality of the school's self-evaluation, particularly in tracking children's attainment and progress and in monitoring teaching and learning, has helped the school to successfully identify and plan its priorities for improvement. There is secure evidence to

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show how effectively these have been implemented, such as children's accelerated progress in linking letters and sounds. Governance is good. Although there have been recent changes in the composition of the governing body, there are established systems for evaluating the school's work and for holding the leadership to account. The school provides good value for money and has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

- Accelerate the progress children make in calculating by:
  - systematically focusing on the development of calculation skills in, adult-led activities
  - increasing the frequency and range of learning opportunities involving calculating skills that children choose for themselves
  - working with parents and carers to encourage children to practise and further develop their calculating skills and experiences at home.
- Maintain a good pace in children's learning throughout each session by:
  - ensuring that each activity has defined starting and finishing points
  - staggering the timing of adult-led group sessions.

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

**2**

When they start in the nursery, children's skills and experiences across the areas of learning are low compared with others of a similar age. Many children demonstrate significant delays in their personal, social and emotional development, language and communication. In addition, a high proportion of children have English as an additional language. Children achieve well and all groups make good progress because staff make good use of continually updated assessment information to tailor learning experiences to children's individual needs. This was well demonstrated in a story session when children, including those learning English as an additional language, retold the story of 'Little Red Riding Hood' in their own words. In this, adults made good use of questioning to prompt and encourage children's contributions. In a child-chosen activity using the interactive whiteboard, a pupil with special educational needs made good progress as he discovered how to change the size of the lines and shapes he was drawing. Scrutiny of children's mark-making work shows clear and sustained progress in a short period of time. When children transfer to Reception classes in their chosen primary schools, their skills and experiences are broadly average for their age across the areas of learning.

Promoting children's personal, social and emotional development is rightly regarded as a priority, and nearly all children make rapid progress in this area of learning. Children's progress in the development of their early writing skills is accelerating, particularly for boys. This is because staff have widened the range of activities available. For example, staff provided clip boards and charts for children to complete when supervising tidying up sessions. As a result, children thoroughly enjoy taking turns in this activity and find a great deal to 'write' about. Their progress is successfully consolidated and further extended in small group, adult-led activities when specific skills are taught and developed in small steps matched to children's prior learning and needs. This focused approach, common to all the areas of learning, is why each of the different groups of children, including the

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more-able, those with special educational needs and those learning English as additional language, make good progress from their respective starting points. Tracking information reflects the growing needs of children when they start in the nursery. It also shows that the rate of progress children make is increasing and that the gap between boys and girls is closing.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children successfully learn to share with and respect those around them, developing an understanding of right and wrong. They learn about their own and different cultures through celebrating a range of festivals and reach out beyond their own community by, for example, visiting a nearby school in a less culturally diverse area to help them celebrate Diwali. Children develop a good understanding of keeping healthy, enjoying their fresh fruit and vegetables at snack time and actively taking part in physical activities outside. Given children's good progress, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development and their above average attendance, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

*These are the grades for children's outcomes*

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Children's attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of children's learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which children feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Children's behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Children's attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Staff successfully plan a range of adult-led and child-chosen activities that capture children's interest and provide good opportunities for them to develop and practise skills

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across all areas of learning. The indoor and outdoor activities complement each other well. Inclement weather does not hamper children's enthusiasm for working outside because staff provide them with a plentiful supply of wet weather clothing and footwear.

Staff effectively support children in their chosen activities, carefully selecting the point at which they intervene to help focus and extend learning. This was seen, for example, when younger children experimented with floating and sinking objects in the water tray or when they chose similarly coloured items from the market stall. However, opportunities to accelerate children's development of calculating skills are sometimes missed. Staff have high, yet realistic expectations of children's behaviour and application to work. They provide consistently good role models and make effective use of praise to reward children's positive responses. Staff also model language well and encourage children to sustain their concentration and follow instructions promptly. They also make good use of signs and symbols to reinforce the spoken word. Just occasionally, however, children are not given sufficient time to respond to questions or discuss what they think with others during adult-led activities.

Daily staff meetings effectively draw on ongoing observations of children's learning, to shape and refine the plans for the next steps in learning. The school has rightly adjusted its timetable for making initial assessments of children's skills and experiences. These now take place as soon as children join, rather than six weeks later as was previously the case. As a result, staff now have a much more accurate picture of children's needs. They are able to focus on developing specific skills with individuals immediately, accelerating their progress by concentrating on regular small but systematic steps in learning. Learning journey records are established and are well illustrated with digital photographs. Links between assessment and planning are flexible and regularly reviewed. For example, children's targets are now summarised on one page rather than on individual sheets, enabling all staff to have quick and easy access to this information.

The school has good induction arrangements in place which include home visits and, where appropriate, the services of an interpreter. Children visit the nursery with their parents and carers prior to starting, and there are flexible arrangements to help children settle. Staff deal with children's personal hygiene needs in a sensitive and dignified way, and they work closely with parents and carers to establish routines and in supporting individual children's medical needs. Children, whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are promptly identified, supported and guided. Staff are actively involved in implementing specialist programmes and guidance, and their work with children having behavioural needs is particularly effective. Staff encourage parents and carers to send their children to nursery on a regular basis and there are good systems in place to check on absences. The nursery has good links with receiving primary schools and prepares children well for their move to Reception classes.

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*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

With the wholehearted support and hard work of the staff, the headteacher is successfully leading the school through a period of change. In their responses to the inspection questionnaire, staff were unanimous in their pride in the school and the way in which their contribution is valued. Improvement plans have a clear focus and their implementation is well supported by staff. The drive to develop the curriculum to better meet the prior experiences and needs of children joining the nursery has been pivotal in supporting their progress. In addition the development of more robust assessment systems has helped the leadership pinpoint areas where children's progress can be accelerated. The accurate monitoring of teaching and learning is helping leaders to constantly refine provision and contributes effectively to staff development. The nursery is working in a purposeful partnership with its local children's centres. For example, by catering for a wider age range than other nurseries, it is able to offer provision for children from vulnerable circumstances.

The school successfully promotes good partnerships with parents, carers and children's extended family members. Daily, informal contact by staff is complemented by children's learning journey records and a detailed annual written report. The school produces a number of leaflets providing parents and carers with guidance as to how they can help their children build on their nursery experiences at home. The school enjoys good links with its partner providers, including sharing good practice with staff from other nursery settings. There are similarly good links with the local authority, health services and other specialist services.

The nursery promotes equal opportunities well, ensuring effective support for children, who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances and successfully closing the gap in learning between different groups. Community cohesion is well promoted, building effectively on the many faiths, cultures and lifestyles represented in the school and the community. This is because the school has effectively audited the provision it makes for children's personal development and the contribution they make to the community, and developed its planning to further promote this provision. Children are successfully developing an awareness, appreciation and tolerance of others.

The governing body has taken positive action to improve its evaluation of the school's work since the last inspection and provides effective challenge. This has been aided by developing the quality of the school's improvement planning, which now includes clear goals and systematic steps by which priorities will be achieved. Safeguarding



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arrangements are good. All the required checks are made on volunteers and staff, and these are recorded correctly on the school's single central record. Training in child protection is regularly updated and the school's procedures are well guided by a rigorous policy.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers responding to the questionnaires was higher than that found in similar schools. Parents and carers are well satisfied with the school. Inspectors looked at the very few concerns raised in the responses to the questionnaires. They found that parents and carers have regular opportunities to talk to staff about their children's progress. They also found that staff provide helpful guidance through personal contact and information leaflets to help parents and carers support their children.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Phoenix 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 27 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 55 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	78	6	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	20	74	7	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	59	10	37	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	70	8	30	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	67	9	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	59	9	33	2	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	52	13	48	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)	12	44	14	52	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	52	13	48	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	48	14	52	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	59	10	37	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	74	7	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	74	7	26	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



8 November 2010

Dear Children

**Inspection of Phoenix Nursery School, Wolverhampton, WV2 3JS**

Thank you very much for making us welcome when we visited your school last week. We saw how well you behave and you told us how much you enjoy coming to the nursery. You also said that you get on well with each other and really like the adults who look after you. You certainly enjoyed your preparations for, and celebrations of, Diwali and Bonfire Night. The jacket potatoes you wrapped in foil and baked in the oven were scrumptious!

Phoenix is a good nursery. All the staff take good care of you and want you to do well. They work hard to make sure that all your different activities are interesting and give you lots of help with your work. They keep a very close eye on how well you are getting on and use this information carefully to plan what you are to learn next. As a result, you all make good progress.

There are two things we have asked the school to do in order to make it even better. The first is to make sure that you have more opportunities, both in the activities which adults lead and those you choose for yourselves, to improve your skills in calculating. This is something for you to practise inside, outside and at home. The other recommendation is to make sure that the adult-led activities do not all happen at once. At the moment, these start at the same time but the groups do not finish together. Sometimes you do not learn as quickly as you should because there is a gap before the next activity starts.

You can help all the adults make these improvements by listening carefully, working hard and being as helpful as you possibly can. We know just how well you can do this already.

Yours sincerely

Michael Best  
Lead inspector

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