

# Alumwell Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104140
<b>Local Authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	355530
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 July 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Walsh

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	120
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Shazia Khan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Armela Patel
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 July 2011
<b>School address</b>	Primley Avenue Walsall WS2 9UP
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited nine sessions and saw twelve members of staff teach. Two sessions of daycare were also observed. Meetings were held with staff and governors. Inspectors observed the work of the school and the daycare provision. They looked at the school's development plans, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's records of children's progress and their learning journeys, and other documentation from the daycare provision. Questionnaires completed by 98 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- What is the progress children make, especially in communication, language and literacy, and the levels of their skills when they leave the nursery?
- How successfully is assessment used to inform teachers' planning?
- What is the impact of the new leadership on provision and outcomes for children?
- How effectively does the school work in partnership with the children's centre?

## Information about the school

The nursery shares a site with an infant school. Children come from a very diverse range of cultures and backgrounds. There has been an increase in the number of children from Pakistani heritages and together with White British children these form the biggest groups. The proportion of children speaking English as an additional language is well above average and many children start at the nursery with very limited spoken English. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The nursery school provides extended day-care provision through Alumwellies. The leadership has changed since the previous inspection. There was an acting headteacher for the first half of the autumn term until the current headteacher was appointed in November 2010.

**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

Alumwell Nursery School provides an outstanding quality of education. The pace of improvement has accelerated since the arrival of the new headteacher. Governors, senior leaders and staff talk enthusiastically about the changes that have been made. Parents accurately use words like 'brilliant' and 'exceptional' to describe this school, which they score 'ten out of ten'.

The well-being of children is central to the school's work and is reflected in the outstanding care, guidance and support it provides. Outstanding collaboration with the local children's centre and other external providers ensures that potentially vulnerable children and their families get timely and effective support. The school's strong emphasis on developing healthy lifestyles and promotion of emotional well-being is reflected in the way that children are exceptionally happy in school and enthusiastically embrace opportunities to keep fit. The high standard of care in the nursery is reproduced in the Alumwellies day-care provision which is also of an outstanding quality and complies with registration requirements.

When children arrive in the nursery their skills are often exceptionally low with some children having very little understanding of spoken English. They make consistently good, and often outstanding, progress from their individual starting points but, despite this, by the time they leave their skills are still below average in many areas of their development. Notable for the exceptional levels of progress are the Pakistani boys who were previously not doing as well. Careful analysis of data by new leaders has pinpointed the areas where children's skills are not yet at age-related expectations. Huge improvements have been made to many aspects of provision, particularly the curriculum, and these have led to sustained improvements in key areas including reading and calculation skills and marked gains in children's creativity. The outdoor area is being used very effectively and exciting practical activities are capturing the interests and imagination of all the children, including some boys who have tended to make slower progress in the past. The new creative approach to learning means that children are appreciating the natural world around them. There is great respect for different religions and cultures and children from a very wide range of backgrounds get on exceptionally well together. All this, plus their outstanding behaviour, illustrates children's excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children thrive in this exciting and vibrant environment and feel exceptionally safe.

The quality of teaching varies between outstanding and satisfactory, but overall it is good. Many staff are very effective at questioning children and moving their learning on. Just occasionally, questioning is not as probing as in the majority of sessions and the teaching not quite as dynamic and exciting. Here the pace of children's learning can sometimes slow a little. Assessment of children's learning in lessons is not always used robustly to inform planning for children of different abilities. Children with special educational needs

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and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because no time is lost in identifying those children who have additional needs and ensuring that they get the expert help they need. Despite the use of robust monitoring procedures in the past, attendance rates are average and are affected by extended holidays to parents' and carers' home countries.

The school has sustained its strengths during a period of change and made many important improvements in a relatively short period of time. The new headteacher has quickly gained the respect of children, parents and carers, staff and governors. Morale is high and both governors and staff share her ambitious vision. Staff talk about a refreshing new approach and are very eager to improve their work. Significant improvements have been made to the way that children's progress is tracked and the school is now able to analyse accurately differences in the rates of progress in different areas of learning and between different groups of children. This information has underpinned the school's accurate self-evaluation and rigorous development planning. Strategies for improvement have been implemented quickly. As a result, progress is moving quickly from good towards outstanding and children really enjoy their learning. This demonstrates the school's outstanding capacity for further improvement.

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

- Boost attendance rates by:
  - working with parents to ensure erratic attendance of a small group of children, particularly where this is the result of family holidays, is eliminated.
- Improve the small amount of satisfactory teaching to good by developing:
  - the questioning skills of a small number of staff
  - teachers' use of assessment information to inform the planning for the needs of children of different abilities

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

<b>1</b>
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When they join the nursery a significant proportion of children lack the skills to communicate with each other and adults. Other skills, including those for reading and writing, awareness of number, knowledge and understanding of the world and creativity, are well below expectations. As a result of good teaching and outstanding care and curriculum provision, children achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development and develop important social skills such as taking turns and working with others. Skills in speaking English improve because many staff are very good at modelling language. Early reading and writing skills are also improving; many children know, for example, that print has meaning. Children's progress in mathematics is rapidly improving because staff are now taking every opportunity to reinforce an understanding of number. These much-improved skills can be seen in the way that children love to count. Many can now count to five and some can even count to twelve.

A stronger emphasis on learning through practical activities and the extensive use of the outdoors mean that children have a wonderful time at school. The majority show high levels of curiosity, and levels of concentration are rapidly improving. The children have good relationships with adults and play well together and readily with others from very different backgrounds. Children are not afraid to ask for help from others or to offer

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support to their classmates. The nursery works hard at promoting healthy lifestyles. During the inspection children were excited about making their own pizza and were learning about how vegetables are good to eat. They are enthusiastic about joining in 'movers and shakers' sessions and the link made between stories and exercise makes keeping active fun. Children take the register, give out fruit snacks and do other little tasks around school very responsibly. They learn to persevere at tasks and become confident learners. This means that 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>1</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>	4
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>1</b>
<b>Children's behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</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>	3
<b>The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</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?

Adults support learning well within a very supportive and caring environment. Staff consistently provide good role models for learning good behaviour and language, with some moving skilfully between speaking fluent English and the children's home language. Many, although not all, staff are very accomplished at questioning children to extend their learning. In a minority of cases, although their approach is warm and friendly, staff do not do enough to excite and enthuse children. Children's learning is checked and this information is collated in 'Learning Journeys' which provide a very detailed record of each child's progress through Nursery. In Alumwellies, assessment information is now being used to plan activities that challenge individual pupils. The information held by the school

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is used in an informal way to ensure that staff are aware of the needs of individuals, but not always sufficiently to ensure that the activities planned are always appropriately challenging.

Curriculum planning is firmly based on children's interests and the much improved use of the outdoors has resulted in an outstanding curriculum. Time is used effectively and there is a very good balance between activities that are chosen by children and those that are supported by adults. Children have good opportunities to work with visiting artists and musicians and this is reflected in their blossoming creativity. Resources are being used inventively, for example by allowing children to make sculptures and pictures from mud, twigs and leaves, to ensure they use their imagination and appreciate the world around them. Good use is made of local facilities like the woods in the infant school and local country parks to bring learning to life. Local roads have been used to teach road safety.

The nursery provides a particularly warm and welcoming environment. Parents and carers say that staff are approachable and polite as well as kind and courteous. Transition arrangements are excellent. Staff work extremely closely with the local children's centre before children start school so that those children in danger of falling behind are offered early booster sessions. Very good links with the neighbouring infant school help smooth transition into the Reception class. Careful consideration is given to the additional needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities during this period of change. Links with the children's centre and a good range of external services also help to ensure that families have access to a very good range of information on health matters and social issues and can access extra support when necessary. The very high standard of care and guidance in the nursery is fully reflected in the day care provision and the staff are equally skilled at supporting children's learning.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The new leadership team is working well together. Those who have new roles, such as managing the provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are embracing these tasks with enthusiasm. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding and have ensured that children are exceptionally well supported and are able to make good and rapidly improving progress. The use of data and direct monitoring of the curriculum, together with very robust development planning, has brought about swift improvement in many areas of the school's work. Monitoring of teaching is systematic but mainly undertaken by the headteacher and external advisers.

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The expertise of other staff in this area is under developed. Nevertheless, the new leadership has brought about a remarkable transformation to the ethos of the nursery in a very short time and motivated the staff to continuously strive for improvement. The leadership and management of Alumwellies, and consequently provision, have also been strengthened in a very short time.

Governance is good. Governors are keen and enthusiastic and very knowledgeable about safeguarding. As a result of their diligent approach, safeguarding procedures are excellent. Staff are carefully vetted. They have a well-developed awareness of safeguarding and are vigilant in the way that they care for and protect children. The effectiveness with which the school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination is good. Respect is at the centre of the school's ethos. Diversity is celebrated and valued and the school ensures there is no discrimination. The school carefully analyses the progress of different groups of pupils. For example, it has recognised that some boys from Pakistani heritages made slower progress than other and so has provided more activities that have engaged and interested these children and accelerated their progress considerably. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. There is a very good understanding of the local community. Children know that they are a valued part of the school community and the school has successfully extended their contact with children from a wider range of backgrounds.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</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>1</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>1</b>

**Views of parents and carers**

Many parents completed their questionnaire and indicated that they were delighted with what the school provides. Many parents wrote to tell inspectors that their children really



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enjoy school and are making good progress. They also said that staff are always welcoming.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Alumwell 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 98 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 120 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	87	89	11	11	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	81	83	16	16	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	80	82	17	17	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	76	78	20	20	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	79	81	17	17	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	77	79	20	20	0	0	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	71	72	25	26	1	1	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)	71	72	26	27	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	73	74	23	23	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	69	70	27	28	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	67	68	27	28	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	73	74	21	21	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	80	82	18	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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.**



13 July 2011

Dear Children

**Inspection of Alumwell Nursery School, Walsall, WS2 9UP**

We really enjoyed talking to you when we visited your nursery. You all have lots of fun at nursery and make good progress, that is why your nursery is outstanding. It was wonderful to see so many smiling faces and we were very pleased to hear that you feel so safe. We enjoyed seeing your super paintings and the lovely pictures made from mud, twigs and leaves. You have good imaginations and are very creative. 'Movers and shakers' looks like lots of fun, what a good idea to have a story with lots of chances to move and keep fit. We noticed that your behaviour is always very good indeed. We were pleased to see the way that you all look after each other and help each other with your work.

The managers at your school are doing a very good job indeed. Your school has really changed lately. You are able to get involved with lots of exciting activities outside, to do more counting and have more opportunities to learn about books. All this is moving your progress from good towards outstanding. Your teachers work very hard and make sure you have lots of interesting things to do. They listen very carefully to you and they always try to help you if they can. We have asked some of your teachers to improve the way they ask you questions. Teachers make regular checks on your progress and we have asked them to use this information in a better way so that they always plan work that meets your individual needs.

You can also help your school by coming to nursery every day.

Yours sincerely

Susan Walsh

Lead inspector

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