

# Featherstone Nursery School

29 Highcroft Road, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 6AU

## Inspection dates

7–8 November 2012

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Almost all parents are delighted with the school. Children quickly settle and thoroughly enjoy their learning.
- Leaders and managers make sure that teaching continues to improve.
- The teaching is good, and some is outstanding, so children make good progress and achieve well. From generally low starting points, children leave the nursery with the knowledge and skills expected at their age.
- The headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteacher, leads the school well.
- The governing body checks on how well children are doing and questions leaders and managers about the school's work.
- Children are well behaved. A few find it hard to behave well all the time and the staff help them to make good improvements.
- Staff are good at encouraging children to be independent, to solve problems, and to care for themselves and about others. Children understand very well how to keep themselves safe.
- The staff work well as a team and are inspired by leaders to do their best for the sake of the children.
- The school provides a wide range of experiences to interest and excite children. Experiences in the 'forest school' are effective in encouraging children's personal development.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough of the teaching is outstanding. There is a suitable plan to improve the teaching, but not enough clarity about what outstanding teaching should look like in the nursery.
- When managers check records kept in school, they do not identify all areas that need improving.
- Plans to help the school improve do not show often enough how the school will measure improvements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited six sessions altogether, in classrooms and out of doors. These were all joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. An end-of-day session was also observed.
- Sessions led by adults were seen, so were those where children selected activities themselves. Over three hours were spent observing children's learning.
- In addition, an hour and a half was spent looking at records of children's learning (profiles).
- The inspector had discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority. The inspector spoke informally to children as they were learning.
- The inspector took account of eight responses on Parent View. The results of two of the school's parental surveys were examined. One of these was carried out at the time of the inspection and 56 parents and carers had completed questionnaires.
- A range of documents was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan, policies, records of checks carried out on staff, volunteers and governors, and selected minutes from governing body meetings. Assessment data were examined and discussed.

## Inspection team

Susan Aldridge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a diverse school community in which many ethnic groups are represented. Over a quarter of children are of Asian origin and a fifth are of White British heritage. Other ethnic groups are smaller.
- Well over a third of children are known to be eligible for free school meals. There is no additional funding for these children.
- Over half of the children are from families who speak English as an additional language. There are 16 different languages represented. The main ones are Punjabi, Urdu and Polish.
- There has been a change to the pattern of attendance since the last inspection. Children attend the school either full-time or part-time. Those who attend part-time come for two and a half days each week, starting either on Monday morning or Wednesday lunchtime.
- The proportion of children who need extra help (either at early years action, early years action plus, or undergoing assessment for a statement of special educational needs) is below that found in primary schools. There are no comparative figures for nursery schools.
- The school occupies the same building as Featherstone Children's Centre. The school's headteacher and governing body lead and manage both. There have been changes to the organisation of children's centres in Birmingham. Featherstone Children's Centre now takes the lead in a group of centres within the area.

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

- Improve teaching so that the majority of it is outstanding by ensuring that:
  - during activities that children choose themselves, staff regularly check that children are doing what was intended
  - activities are well designed to challenge children of different abilities
  - staff are clear about the features of outstanding teaching.
- Strengthen leadership and management by making sure that:
  - children's profiles have sufficient evidence to show the progress they have made in developing the skills necessary for writing
  - incidents are correctly recorded and those for the school are kept separately from those of the children's centre
  - wherever possible, the school's improvement plan includes targets that are measurable.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Almost all parents who expressed a view said that their children make good progress. A typical written comment to the school's most recent questionnaire was, 'She is thriving here and always tells me about what she has been learning.'
- When children arrive, their knowledge and skills are below those expected at their age in all areas of learning, but particularly in communication, language and literacy and mathematical learning. By the time they leave the nursery, almost all have developed their skills so that they are at expected levels of development.
- Children's profiles show clearly the good progress they make in almost all areas of learning and support the assessment information that the school collects. Children themselves recognise many ways in which they have developed, such as learning to ride a bike, write their name, count, do puzzles, cut fruit in the cafe, paint and sing.
- Children greatly enjoy school and arrive with a smile on their faces. They all have favourite activities. Occasionally, they give reasons why they like particular things, such as, '...bee bots, because they move when you press the buttons'. They also identify favourite stories and characters within them, such as Iggle Piggle.
- Children from families who speak a language other than English at home quickly learn English. Staff use signs, gestures and symbols well to help children understand. They speak English clearly and correctly, providing a good model for children to copy.
- Those who need extra help to learn are well supported. The school draws on all the sources of external support that are available to it and staff are well trained to use methods that help children to learn. For instance, a large egg timer is used successfully to help children make changes of activity.
- Children who are known to be eligible for free school meals make good progress. Many of these are full-time and they benefit greatly from this pattern of attendance. As a result, the progress made by these children is similar to that made by other groups.

### The quality of teaching is good

- When children arrive they are carefully assessed. There are suitable internal and external checks to make sure these assessments are accurate. This information, together with that provided by parents and carers, is used well to plan activities that are matched to children's ages and abilities. Occasionally, this adaptation does not go far enough and parts of tasks are too difficult for a few.
- Staff plan well together those sessions where children select activities from a range provided. Using large 'floor books', they draw on children's interests, identify possible directions that learning might take and involve children in planning learning activities. This engages children very well, encourages their language development and leads to high levels of motivation.
- Staff are very skilled at encouraging learning by intervening to ask children questions and this has improved since the last inspection. They rarely let an opportunity slip. For instance, when building a structure with wooden shapes, a member of staff engaged children in talking about two- and three-dimensional shapes. Her frequent and correct use of mathematical terms led to

children using these with confidence, including words new to them, like 'cylinder'.

- On most occasions, even though staff are busy encouraging learning, they check that all children are doing something purposeful. They are skilled at engaging those who flit from one activity to another. On a few occasions, they do not notice one or two children are not doing an activity as intended.
- Staff record a wealth of information from their observations of children's learning. These are collected in profiles of generally good quality. However, a few of these reflect too little of what less-able children have done to build the skills they need in order to be able to write, such as making marks with their fingers in shaving foam or sand.
- Staff make good use of books in English and another language to support children and families who do not speak English at home. The school has recently started to host a session where parents and children can share books together. During these, staff demonstrate how adults can best encourage learning during the activity.
- A bilingual assistant and visiting speech and language therapists provide additional expertise. For instance, they lead small groups in sessions that are effective in encouraging language and social skills. All adults make good use of new technology, songs, rhymes and approaches that stimulate children's senses.

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

- Children behave well, showing respect for staff and one another. There is very little bickering, because they quickly learn to take turns and share resources, so few incidents occur. They soon learn the importance of 'kind hands' and, by the time they leave, all identify friends that they particularly like to play with.
- There are clear and well-constructed behaviour management plans for children with challenging behaviour, and these are followed well by all staff. As a result, these children make good improvements in their behaviour and social skills.
- Staff set a good example to children, and relationships throughout the school's diverse community are very harmonious. Children feel safe in school and all parents and carers are confident that children are well cared for at school.
- A particularly strong feature is the way that the 'forest school' is used to enable children to learn to take measured risks. Here they learn, amongst other things, how to stay safe in a group, the way they should react to dogs they may meet, how to use tools such as a bill hook safely and how to light a fire correctly by bending down on one knee, using the 'respect position'. Children also learn social skills such as cooperation, when they work in teams to build a shelter in the forest, for instance.
- Attendance is below the average for primary schools and not all parents bring children in on time. The school does a good deal to encourage good attendance and stresses the importance of establishing this habit at an early age. It is now introducing a home-school agreement.

### **The leadership and management** is good

- The headteacher is well regarded in the local authority and the deputy headteacher assists her effectively, particularly during the period of children's centre reorganisation, which has been demanding of the headteacher's time. Staff feel well supported in developing their skills and

inspired by the example set by both the headteacher and her deputy. The deputy headteacher provides a very strong role model of teaching young children.

- Staff are given responsibility for leading aspects of the school's work. Teachers play their part in monitoring the work of other staff. All staff are involved in an appraisal process through which their effectiveness is measured by the extent to which they meet the challenging targets set for them.
- Assessment information is used well to identify what the school does well and where it needs to improve. Areas requiring improvement are included in a well-constructed plan. This has all the information needed to support development, but opportunities are missed to make targets measurable. This makes it more difficult to measure success.
- Leaders and managers check carefully how well children are doing throughout the year. They make sure that any who are not progressing as they should have the extra help they need. The different groups are catered for well. For instance, a parent governor has translated the school's 'welcome' book into Polish.
- The monitoring of teaching is regular and frequent. Staff find the feedback they receive helpful in moving their teaching on. The school improvement plan identifies the need to make more of the teaching outstanding and includes a suitable range of tasks to achieve this, such as visits to outstanding settings. However, the teaching and learning policy does not make clear enough what outstanding teaching should look like.
- Monitoring includes checking of records, such as children's profiles. However, this does not identify all aspects in need of improvement. The record of incidents serves for both the children's centre and the school, and this is not appropriate, as it includes some concerns that should be recorded separately.
- The local authority rightly provides a 'light-touch' for this good school. The school employs an external consultant to give an external professional view and advice on school improvement. The resulting reports are provided to governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body fulfils its duties well. It ensures that the school is a safe environment and that staff are appropriately checked and trained in child protection matters. The Chair of the Governing Body is particularly influential in making decisions. Governors complete suitable training courses to enable them to hold the school to account through their committees. The teaching and learning committee checks the effectiveness of teaching by asking questions about assessment data presented. Governors make sure that decisions about how money is spent are wise ones that give value for money. They decide whether teachers should be rewarded with salary increases and work with an external consultant to set and review targets for the headteacher.

## 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>	103139
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	400587

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	85
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jules Gregory
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elaine Dupree
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 July 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 6753408
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