

Alumwell Nursery School

Primley Avenue, Walsall, West Midlands, WS2 9UP

Inspection dates 8–9 January 2014

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 children enjoy coming to nursery. All staff work closely together to plan a highly relevant and varied range of activities that meet children’s interests and learning needs extremely well.
- There has been strong improvement in the children’s learning and progress since the previous inspection and achievement is now outstanding. The children are busy learning for the whole time that they are at nursery.
- Teaching is outstanding. All practitioners ask questions that encourage the children to stick at an activity for long enough to think for themselves how to solve problems and to extend and improve their skills and learning.
- The nursery’s well-organised toys and resources and vibrant displays provide a welcoming place that help children want to learn.
- Relationships are extremely positive. Highly effective and sensitive support is given to individual children and families who need extra help and support from time to time.
- The children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is provided for exceptionally well through the variety of activities, resources and events.
- The nursery provides a safe place where children develop high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. As a result, they keep trying until they achieve what they can, including things that they are trying for the first time.
- Children feel and know how to keep themselves safe. They behave extremely well at all times because they are so engaged and interested in what they are doing
- Close working partnerships with ‘Alumwellies’, the children’s centre, and the infant school ensure that support for all children, especially disabled children and those who have special educational needs, is in place as soon as they start at both schools.
- The headteacher has systematically improved the quality of teaching through clear targets for staff performance supported by relevant staff training.
- All staff have high expectations and aspirations for the children to do the best that they can. As a result, there is a whole school-drive and commitment for continual improvement.
- Governors are very passionate and supportive of the school. They are fully involved in evaluating what is going well and so understand clearly what the nursery’s continued improvement needs are.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed both morning and afternoon sessions in the nursery, about half of the time jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Twelve practitioners were observed including the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- The inspector looked at past and current information about the children's progress. She also looked at the children's learning journeys and their pictures and writing on display.
- The inspector looked at the nursery school's checks about what is going well, school improvement planning and documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding.
- The inspector met with staff, with representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors talked to parents informally at the start and end of sessions. She took into account the nursery school's own parent surveys. There were too few responses shown in the online questionnaire (Parent View) to consider.
- The inspectors took note of 10 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Georgina Beasley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Alumwell Nursery is larger than the average-sized nursery school.
- Children are from a number of different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A well-above average number of children speak English as an additional language and many of these speak little English when they first start nursery.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs supported through early action is above average.
- The proportion supported at early action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The nursery does not receive funding for the pupil premium (extra funds for children known to be eligible for free school meals, children in local authority care and other children).
- The nursery does not receive additional funding for sport development.
- The linked day-care 'Alumwellies' is inspected separately and is not included in this report.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Involve practitioners more regularly in observing each other teach so they are better able to share with other nurseries and schools what makes their practice so effective.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children typically start at the nursery with skills and abilities well below those expected for their age in all areas of learning. They make outstanding progress in the time that they are in nursery so that most are learning securely within the levels expected for their age by the time that they leave.
- Some of these children and all those who start at the levels expected for their age leave at the end of the year with skills and abilities above those expected especially in their personal, social and emotional development. All children are extremely well prepared for learning in their next school.
- All children are actively engaged in activity the minute they walk through the door and do not stop until they are picked up at the end of each session. This is because activities meet their interests and learning needs exceptionally well. The children quickly learn to do things for themselves and enjoy talking about what they are doing and learning because they are so interested and motivated to learn.
- Children develop high levels of problem-solving skills by the time that they leave nursery. The most able are starting to decide for themselves whether what they make and do is finished or whether they need to make further improvements.
- Children enjoy listening to stories and often join in with the words and actions of those that they remember. They read pictures in books to tell what is happening in both stories that they know and those they have not heard before. The most-able are beginning to read some familiar words and to say what they think may happen next taking their clues from the words and pictures.
- Activities such as the 'car wash' and 'mud kitchen' extend the children's physical development, vocabulary and language extremely well. They talk about what they can see, hear and touch as they swirl the soapy water round in circles with their large brushes or transfer mud from one container to another by pouring or scooping with spoons and ladles. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs benefit particularly well from one to one support with these types of activities to help them develop their physical and language skills.
- Children who speak English as an additional language make the same outstanding progress as other groups. Targeted support for individuals and small groups ensure that they learn English quickly and talk about what they are doing and learning confidently with the most-able children exceeding the levels expected for their age by the time that they leave nursery.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Practitioners who work in the nursery are highly skilled at asking questions that find out what children are thinking so that they can help them to solve problems and to extend their learning. On finding a ball in a tree in Forest School, the children were guided by questions to find a stick long enough to unhook the ball from the branch. The question, 'Have you finished?' helped one boy to make further improvements to his stick man.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs are supported extremely well to help them overcome their difficulties and make outstanding progress. Practitioners ensure that all children, but especially this group, receive just the right amount of individual attention to help them achieve their individual targets by showing them what to do and by telling them the words they need to describe what they are doing.
- Practitioners make careful notes of what the children say and do which they respond to highly effectively. They join in with the children's play during sessions and immediately help develop vocabulary, language, skills, knowledge and thinking by adding a resource, asking a question or suggesting an idea.
- Practitioners treat each other and the children with high levels of respect which the children copy when they talk and play with each other. Many practitioners speak to the children in their

home language and in English which helps them to follow instructions when completing tasks, games and activities.

- Children share models, pictures and stories that they have made at home during the first focus-group meeting every day. This encourages and enables parents to support their children's learning effectively at home. Children can choose a book every day if they wish for parents to share and read with them at home.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is outstanding

- The nursery's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding. The nursery provides high levels of care for the children and their families and so the children feel safe and their parents are confident that they will be safe when at nursery. During the weekly trip to Forest School the children remember the rules for keeping themselves safe with little prompt from an adult and respond immediately when asked to stop or asked, 'One two three, where are you?'
- The behaviour of children is outstanding. Children quickly learn to take turns with toys and equipment and to share the space and learning areas. Children who have been at nursery for more than a term help each other with tasks such as holding play dough cakes while a friend adds the correct number of candles to each one or holding a container still while a friend adds water to mud.
- Children have extremely positive attitudes to learning. They use their imaginations to explore new materials and equipment and to act out real and imaginary experiences. This helps them to sustain their curiosity and high levels of concentration for good lengths of time for their age. Nearly all children were observed to stick at a task until they finished.
- Children have high levels of independence. For example, they manage to put coats on for themselves and remember without prompt to wash hands after messy play and going to the toilet. They confidently ask for help if they find anything too difficult such as doing up zips or picking up a long stick to hook a ball out of a tree.
- The nursery is supported well by parents in its drive to improve attendance. Most children attend every day unless they are ill and rates are higher than at the time of the previous inspection. The children show pride when they receive a bronze, silver or gold certificate for good attendance.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The nursery's strong and continued improvement is due to determined and resilient leadership from the headteacher, deputy headteacher, whole-staff team and governors. All are committed to do what they need for children to achieve as well as they can. Constant checks of the children's learning and progress result in an accurate view of the nurseries success.
- The whole-staff team holds a reflection meeting at the end of every day to discuss the children's learning and to plan additional activities that build knowledge and skills from day to day. The information from these, weekly planning meetings and six-weekly formal discussions about progress result in immediate changes being made to teaching and the curriculum if the progress of any individual or group of children slows.
- The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates all activities. Children are encouraged to work together in teams such as completing big paintings, clay models or acting out favourite stories. They learn about their own and other beliefs and cultures through a number of well-planned events throughout the year including Diwali, Eid and Christmas. Music and art are regular activities for the children to enjoy.
- Step-by-step guidance ensures all staff apply consistently procedures for children's safety. Risk assessments for all children who have a medical need or disability ensure that all staff are ready for an emergency should it occur. The family support worker works closely with the nursery to ensure children attend regularly.

■ The local authority recognises that the nursery is highly effective and so gives advice and support only when requested. It is currently supporting the nursery in its plans to deliver training to other local schools and nurseries in the local authority particularly on what practitioners say and do to enable the children to learn so successfully.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– Governors meet regularly with each other and with the nursery staff to check that improvement is happening as planned. Targets for improvement are challenging, focused on high expectations for the children’s progress and reviewed constantly. Reviews lead to challenging questions about why the nursery has decided to do what it has and whether actions are making the difference they should to the children’s learning. Most live or work in the locality and so know the needs of the children and local community extremely well. They use this knowledge to ensure that resources and staffing is deployed to best effect. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements regarding safeguarding and staff performance and training are met.

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	104140
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	431154

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 – 4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shazia Khan
Headteacher	Armela Patel
Date of previous school inspection	11 – 12 July 2011
Telephone number	01922 721264
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