

Alexandra Nursery School

Martha Street, Willows Lane, Daubhill, Bolton, Lancashire, BL3 4AH

Inspection dates 3–4 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Alexandra is an excellent school where all staff promote the motto of 'celebrating our differences'. Children of many different languages and backgrounds get on very well and respect one another. As a result, the school is preparing children successfully to live in modern Britain.
- Teaching is often of the very highest standard. Staff have excellent access to training. Checks of their work by leaders are frequent, detailed and helpful.
- Those children who are unhappy are given sensitive, thoughtful help by all workers and particularly by their named member of staff. This leads to children settling well and loving their days at school.
- Parents are very positive about the school. They know that teachers and early years practitioners are highly skilled and working very successfully to help children to develop and succeed.
- Staff keep a close eye on children's progress and use this information fully to improve teaching. However, some summary information recorded by leaders is difficult to access quickly and not in a format that is easy to review.
- Children who attend the specially-resourced provision are given excellent support and make outstanding progress in their development.
- In spite of several changes of staffing, the school continues to improve. Leaders and governors ensure that children make excellent progress from their different starting points. Children's attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now above the national average.
- Children's behaviour is excellent. They understand school rules and what staff expect of them. They show a clear understanding of acting safely, and they are not afraid to try new activities for themselves.
- Resources for children to use in their play and activities are presented beautifully by staff. Children's own models, writing and drawing are celebrated with great care on the walls and in display areas. This is because the school wants children to be excited and enthusiastic about learning – and they are.
- Children are kept safe when using the internet at school. However, staff do not have up-to-date training about online safety.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning and teaching in the nursery sessions and spoke to children. Some teaching was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at children’s work and displays around the school.
- Meetings were held with four members of the governing body, a range of staff, and a representative of the local authority.
- A wide range of documents were considered including: reviews of how well the school is doing; plans for the future; documents about the care and protection of children; records of meetings of the governing body; school reviews of the quality of teaching; plans for learning; records of targets for teachers; and information about children’s progress.
- The inspectors considered the views of 13 staff that completed an Ofsted questionnaire about working in the school.
- There were very few parent responses available in the online Parent View survey or by email to Ofsted at the time of the inspection. The inspectors spoke informally to parents, and reviewed evidence from school surveys of parents.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

David Halford

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Alexandra Nursery School is an average-sized maintained nursery school.
- The school offers 60 part-time places and children attend school part-time Monday to Thursday.
- Since the previous inspection there have been lots of changes in staffing in the school.
- Very recently three governors, including the Vice-Chair resigned their roles.
- The majority of children are from South Asian backgrounds with other children from a wide range of different backgrounds.
- The majority of children speak English as an additional language. There are 16 different languages spoken within the school.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs is higher than that found nationally.
- The headteacher manages registered early years provision for children from birth on-site and at another location near to the school. These settings are inspected separately and their reports are available on the Ofsted website.
- The school has eight specially-resourced places for children with special educational needs. Since the previous inspection, more of these children have complex learning difficulties. These places are integrated within the provision for two- and three-year-olds.
- In February 2013, Ofsted published a document showing the good mathematics teaching in the school. This case study is called *Learning to count: Alexandra Nursery School*. It is available on the Ofsted website.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff have up-to-date training about internet safety.
- Further improve the ease with which leaders can access information and make conclusions about the learning of children.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher shows determination and high expectations in leading the school. Staff respect her dedication and commitment to ensuring that children get the very best start to their schooling. The headteacher values the contribution of staff that hold different qualifications and works very successfully to help the whole team to cooperate and learn from one another.
- Teaching is led very well by the headteacher. She has a deep, up-to-date understanding of how young children learn. She uses this frequently to provoke staff to think more about education. She knows how to help staff to do their very best. She makes sure that the work of staff is checked thoroughly and often, and linked to clear advice about how to get better. She ensures that staff have extensive opportunities for training.
- The school promotes British values exceptionally well. The school motto, 'celebrating our differences', shapes how the school acts every day. This means that children are often helped to discuss who they are, and how to be with others. Children of many different backgrounds are at ease with one another at school. There is no recorded discrimination. As one young girl said with confidence: 'It doesn't matter if boys want to wear a Cinderella costume. Boys and girls can play with dolls.'
- Leaders at every level are active in helping the school to maintain high standards and continue to improve. For example, the accuracy of staff assessments of children are checked thoroughly and confirmed by more expert colleagues.
- Staff and leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of where the school is successful. They recognise that they are working to a very high standard but understand where work could be improved further. Well-considered plans for development are in place. These are based upon extensive reviews of the school's work, including surveys of parents' views.
- The subjects that are taught in school are of great interest to the children. Children learn to understand the wider world through music, baking, visitors, trips out of school as well as the celebration of festivals and special days. These experiences are planned very carefully to cover the wide range of languages and backgrounds of the children already attending the school.
- In the past few years there have been several changes of staffing. This has not had a negative impact because the headteacher and members of the governing body keep a watchful eye on the quality of the school. The school is now even better than at the previous inspection.
- The care and protection of children is given close attention. All required checks of staff and visitors are in place. Staff know what to do if they are concerned about a child or someone that knows the child. No mobile phones are used around school. Children are supervised fully when using the internet and their access is limited to websites that are suitable for young children. The headteacher checks that staff use social media responsibly when outside of school. However, staff have not undertaken training about internet safety within the past year.
- The local authority recommends the school to other schools and early years settings as a model of outstanding teaching and learning. Local authority staff know the school well and give clear, accurate challenge to the headteacher through their visits. Local authority advice has ensured that governors are planning for the long-term staffing and running of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school extremely well. They feel connected to what happens through their active involvement in 'curriculum groups' and committees, as well as frequent visits to classrooms. They know about the progress of children and about the quality of teaching.
 - Although losing three governors recently, the governing body has acted quickly to recruit new members and additional expertise.
 - The governing body ensures that all appropriate links are in place between pay and the quality of work by individual teachers. They play a key role in making decisions with the headteacher about staffing.
 - Governors and staff meet together each year to review and plan ahead. As one governor said, 'Governors and staff – it feels like a team.'

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. There is no bullying. Children are confident to say no and speak to adults when the actions of others are unhelpful. They know the school rules and are generous, helpful

and kind towards each other. They are polite and inquisitive towards visitors.

- Children enjoy being part of a named group with their special member of staff. This key person helps them to get on well with others. As a result, children are excited and curious about learning. They enjoy being given roles of responsibility to help their classmates at times for eating, tidying or sharing.

Safety

- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding. For children who are the early stages of learning to speak English or learning to communicate, staff show extra attention to ensure that they are kept safe. Children attending the resourced provision are cared for very well to ensure their safety.
- The school emphasises to parents that children's attendance at nursery is important preparation for later life. Absences are followed up quickly and clearly. Good attendance is celebrated. Consequently, children's attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now above the national average.
- Clear policies and procedures are in place to keep children healthy and free from harm. The headteacher spends much time helping newer and less qualified staff to understand how to keep children safe. The knowledge of all staff is checked regularly.
- Staff give children skilled assistance when they start at nursery. This helps children to understand what to do indoors and outdoors. Staff check that children act safely when using a range of equipment, as well as encouraging children to 'have a go'. Consequently, children are unafraid to try things for themselves and show high levels of independence.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is of a high quality. This is because staff work very well together to share their understanding of excellent teaching. Parents recognise that the quality of teaching is helping their children to make outstanding progress in their learning.
- Teaching for children in the specially-resourced provision is excellent. Each child's unique and complex needs are valued and nurtured with immense skill and dedication. This ensures that children make small but significant steps forward in their learning.
- Some teaching is truly exceptional. This is because staff are so highly skilled in helping children through discussion, questioning and sharing their ideas with others. For example, a group of children talked about themselves with confidence to a puppet who spoke Mandarin to them through the early years practitioner. They progressed to talking to the doll about different languages and about appropriate behaviour.
- Children's model-making, writing and drawing are valued highly in attractive displays throughout the school. Resources for them to use in their play and activities are presented beautifully by staff.
- Links between the school and the nursery for children under the age of three years are excellent. This brings many benefits when supporting families. It also helps staff to have a shared approach to planning activities for children. This increases children's progress.
- When children start nursery school, staff assess children's feelings carefully. Where children are not comfortable or do not feel good about themselves, staff give very careful extra support. In particular, excellent support is given to individual children by their named key person. As a result, children become at ease at school and very happy.
- Assessment throughout children's time at school makes full use of parents' knowledge of their children. Records include careful observations made by staff when children are playing and learning in nursery. Children's learning is recorded and celebrated in attractive 'learning journeys' and staff make extensive use of these assessments to plan their teaching.
- Teaching at group times is very successful because staff use highly-developed teaching and learning programmes written by the school. For example, when staff plan to teach groups of children about communication and language, they know very clearly what activities to use. They know what words to include, and what to look for and assess. Teaching children to speak English is given great importance as preparation for primary school.
- Carefully-chosen fiction and non-fiction books are presented attractively around the school. Children use these books frequently and with care. Staff teach children to name the title and author of books and understand the sounds that letters make. Parents extend this at home through the loan of storybooks that the school have specially matched to the abilities of children.
- Staff make excellent use of play, games and group activities to teach children how to write. This helps children to develop new skills and become confident and enthusiastic about writing. When they see adults writing, children ask what they are doing and why.

- Staff take every opportunity to improve children's mathematical skills. As a result, children use mathematical language often, try to solve problems and count frequently because they find it such fun.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Most children start nursery school with a limited ability to speak and understand English. A very large majority of children also have personal and physical skills and abilities that are less than typical for their age. By the time children leave the school, they make excellent progress and are ready to continue their learning at primary school.
- Parents comment very positively that for any child that has limited space to play outdoors at home, this is not a problem at nursery school. They know that nursery staff make full use of the wonderful nursery garden to teach children to be strong, skilled and confident in their physical skills. This helps children to catch up quickly with others.
- Children who attend the linked nursery from birth to age three years are ready to continue learning when they start school. This head start continues to benefit them throughout their time at nursery school, particularly in their confidence and their ability to communicate.
- All children make huge strides forward in their learning because of the quality of teaching. They make the greatest progress in their personal development and their ability to talk and listen. They want to learn, are happy and communicate well with others.
- Staff know children in their key groups very well and have a full understanding of the needs and progress of each child. Assessments are frequent and accurate. This means that the most-able children are identified quickly and supported skilfully to make even better progress.
- Leaders keep a close eye on children's progress across the school. For example, their checks showed that children did not progress as well in mathematics. Through training and support to staff they tackled this matter swiftly. Children's progress in mathematics is now excellent.
- Staff have an excellent understanding of child development and make full use of this when supporting children who have special educational needs. As a result, this group of children make excellent progress in their skills and abilities.
- Children with complex learning difficulties who attend the specially-resourced provision make excellent progress from their starting points. This is because of the excellent leadership of this provision by the Inclusion Coordinator and the sensitive, highly-skilled support from individual staff. The school makes good efforts to work with other agencies to support individual children.
- When groups of children are ready to leave the school, leaders review in detail how well these children have developed since the age of three years. However, the systems for recording children's progress are too complicated. It is therefore difficult for leaders to access information quickly and in an easily understandable way.

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	105142
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	448089

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynne Stokes
Headteacher	Barbara Kenny
Date of previous school inspection	15 February 2012
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