

Inspection of an outstanding school: Alexandra Nursery School

Martha Street, Daubhill, Bolton, Lancashire BL3 4AH

Inspection dates:

26 September 2019

Outcome

Alexandra Nursery School continues to be an outstanding school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

All children receive a very warm welcome at this school, regardless of their race, gender or culture. Many of the children are new to the country and speak very little English. They receive excellent levels of support from bilingual staff. This helps them settle quickly into the school. However, the support that parents receive to help their children to learn outside of school is underdeveloped.

Staff expect a lot from all children. They work hard to ensure that each and every child gets the best possible start to their education. No one is complacent. Staff go the extra mile to ensure that children achieve well.

Most children enjoy attending school. This is evident from the smiles on their faces, which never waiver throughout the day. Children feel safe. Classrooms are wonderful places for children to learn and play safely. However, some children arrive late, and this can affect their learning.

Children get on very well with staff and each other. They are developing a caring attitude towards one another. We saw no evidence of any form of bullying. Children from different faiths and cultures play happily together. Staff are kind, attentive and positive role models. They lead by example and children follow.

Parents and carers are very happy with the school. Their comments to us were extremely positive. Parents typically commented that their children 'thrive academically and socially at this school'.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The headteacher is the captain of her ship. She knows her school very well. She recognises that the school's partnership with parents is not as strong as it could be. This

is because there is not enough support for some parents to help their children to continue to learn at home. Added to this, many of the governors are new and still settling into their roles. They do not challenge the headteacher effectively in order to improve the quality of education further.

In school, leaders and staff are clear about how the curriculum should be taught. They understand that what children are taught in the early years will help them be successful in the future. Staff know what to teach and in what order. They know exactly what children need to know before they move them on to more challenging work. Children have a positive attitude to their learning. This helps them achieve well. Children rarely squabble because they are so busy.

Leaders encourage children to become confident readers at every opportunity. Teachers talk knowledgeably about the types of books that children read. We listened to children read. They handle books with care and turn the pages correctly. Book areas are warm and cosy. We saw children reading books on their own, with friends and listening to a story as part of a group. The teaching of phonics starts as soon as children start school. A close eye is kept on the progress that children make. Extra support is given to those who are falling behind. In turn, those who are racing ahead are provided with more challenging work. For some parents, however, helping children to read at home is challenging due to language barriers. Leaders accept that these parents require more support.

Staff plan a wide range of purposeful activities that develop children's mathematical skills. We observed children identifying numbers while playing hopscotch. At snack time, children counted in sequence as they handed out cups and plates. Children solved simple problems as they worked out how much dough they needed to make a cupcake.

There is a real buzz of conversation around the school. Staff speak precisely, and they model the correct use of language. Children listen carefully and follow instructions. Staff encourage children to respond in sentences. They correct mispronunciations sensitively.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. Staff are highly skilled. They work well with other professionals to ensure that the individual needs of these children are met.

Although improving, there are some children who do not attend school regularly. Others arrive late. This prevents some children from learning as much as they should.

Staff feel valued and work well as a team. Leaders understand the pressure that staff are under and how hard they work. Staff told us that they are well supported and protected from bullying and harassment.

Children gain an appreciation of the world around them. They learn about different faiths and cultures, and they raise money for charitable causes. Children enjoy visits to places of local interest, such as farms, churches and mosques.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of keeping children safe. All staff receive training and regular safeguarding updates. They have a good awareness of the signs and symptoms of abuse and the procedures to follow if they are concerned about a child's welfare.

The school building is safe and secure. A record of visitors to the school is maintained, and visitors are never left alone with the children. Leaders ensure that vulnerable children and families receive the support they need in a timely manner.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- As identified in the school self-evaluation, the school is keen to strengthen the partnership with parents. This will ensure that parents take a more active part in their children's learning so that they achieve more. It will also give them a deeper understanding of what their children are learning and how their children learn.
- Although non-statutory, good attendance is promoted. Attendance has improved slightly, but there are still some children who do not come to school on a regular basis. Others arrive late for school. The school needs to think of more innovative ways of encouraging and supporting children to come to school regularly and to be punctual. This is so that attendance and punctuality do not impede children's learning and development.
- The governing body has recently been reconstituted, and many governors are new to their roles. The school needs to ensure that new governors quickly become skilled in offering senior leaders the highest level of support and challenge. This is so that the quality of education improves further. This will ensure that all children get the very best start to their education.

Background

When we have judged a maintained nursery school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Alexandra Nursery School to be outstanding on 4 March 2015.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	105142
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10058100
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mrs Beryl Morgan
Headteacher	Miss N McDonagh
Website	www.alexandra-nursery.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 March 2015

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and chair of the governing body have been appointed.
- The school now provides care and education for two-year-olds.
- The school houses a specially resourced provision for children with SEND. Most children accessing the specially resourced provision have autism spectrum disorders or social and communication disorders.
- Children attend either on a full-time or part-time basis.

Information about this inspection

- We observed teaching and learning in classes across the school, including joint observations with the headteacher.
- We held meeting with members of the senior leadership team, governors and staff.
- We spoke with parents as they brought their children to school.
- We looked at examples of children’s work and spoke with children when visiting lessons.

- We listened to children read.
- We reviewed safeguarding documentation, considered how this relates to daily practice and spoke with staff.
- We carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics and communication and language. Deep dives are the methodology by which inspectors identify why a subject is as it is. This entails discussion with subject leaders, visits to lessons, looking at examples of children's work, discussions with teachers and discussion with children.
- We took into consideration the three responses from parents and nine from staff to Ofsted's online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Sheila Iwaskow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ann Dimeck

Ofsted Inspector

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