

INSPECTION REPORT

ALEXANDRA NURSERY SCHOOL

Bolton

LEA area: Bolton

Unique reference number: 105142

Headteacher: Mrs Barbara Kenny

Reporting inspector: Mr Brian Allaway
4287

Date of inspection: 29 February 2000

Inspection number: 190598.

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Martha Street Willows Lane Bolton Greater Manchester
Postcode:	BL4 4AH
Telephone number:	01204 652140
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Appropriate authority:	Bolton Local Education Authority
Name of chair of management committee	Councillor Mrs Linda Thomas
Date of previous inspection:	03/12/96

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Alexandra Community Nursery School has places for 120 part-time children. There are currently 119 children on roll. It is a popular school and is generally full. Children are admitted from 3 to 5 years old, mostly on a part-time basis. Currently 10 children attend the nursery on a full-time basis. The school is near the centre of Bolton and is surrounded by terraced housing and shops. Most children live close to the school. There are 20 children on the register of special educational needs. 85% of the children are from Asian ethnic minority families and the majority of the children are learning English as a second language. The most common languages spoken are Gujarati, Urdu and Bengali. Many children have had little pre-school experience and some have never heard or spoken English before starting at the nursery. There is little movement of children in the area but long holidays to India interrupt the education of many of the children. The children's attainment on entry covers the full ability range but there is a significant number of children who have special educational needs. Overall attainment is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school which provides the children with an exciting, lively and well planned curriculum. The school is a friendly community where relationships are excellent and parents and teachers and staff from a range of support agencies work very well together. Children make good progress during their time in the nursery and grow in confidence and independence. Overall they attain standards which are in line for children of their age by the time they leave the school. The quality of the headteacher's leadership is outstanding and this is readily acknowledged by parents. The quality of teaching is frequently very good and nursery nurses undertake their teaching commitments and responsibilities extremely well. All staff are keen to strive for improvements, they are reflective and evaluate their work on a regular basis. The school is maintained by the Local Education Authority and does not have a delegated budget. The limited budget allocated for the purchase of resources is managed very well.

What the school does well

- The school is led and managed very well by the headteacher.
- The children are provided with a stimulating and broad curriculum.
- Pupils who are learning English as an additional language make particularly good progress.
- The school communicates very well with parents.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good and often very good.
- Assessment, recording and reporting procedures are used very well to set appropriate and challenging tasks for all children.

What could be improved

- The school is allocated insufficient secretarial time. There is no funded provision to supervise those children who are full-time and stay at the school for their lunch.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan produced by the school, in consultation with the Local Education Authority

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in December 1996. The key issues identified in the report have been developed so well that both points are now strengths of the school.

One key issue required the school to secure appropriate specialist support to enable assessments to be made of children who have English as an additional language. This has led to the appointment of a trilingual teacher, together with the very effective deployment of a part-time bilingual nursery nurse from the Local Education Authority's multicultural service. Both members of staff provide very good teaching. Staff, parents and pupils also gain much from the availability of an interpreter. The children are grouped for language and story work based on their ability to speak and understand English. There is evidence that all children make good progress over time.

The key issue relating to the review of special educational needs procedures has also been addressed very well. This has resulted in a comprehensive system of assessing all children's needs, recording their progress and reporting to parents. Review procedures are documented very well and parents are fully involved in the review process. Children with statements of special educational needs benefit very well from the support of a special educational needs nursery nurse. Whilst the school makes appropriate use of this effective resource and deploys volunteers well, there are a number of children who have special educational needs and who require more frequent one-to-one support. The school is not staffed well enough for this to happen frequently enough.

The school has also addressed other recommendations from the report which were not key issues. Teachers' mathematics subject knowledge has been improved and number work is a regular feature of the curriculum. The headteacher leads imaginative and stimulating number and counting activities with all of the children each week based on the exploits of 'Number Bear'. Resources in information technology have been improved since the last inspection. However, the school is frequently frustrated by the unreliability of the hardware.

The school has been very successful in monitoring its many strengths and has improved the quality of teaching. Pupils' attainment in language and literacy and mathematics has improved since the last inspection and is now in line with national expectations.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about the achievements of pupils in relation to the national early learning goals by the time they leave the school.

Performance in:	
language and literacy	C
mathematics	C
personal and social development	B
other areas of the curriculum	B

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

At this stage in the year, evidence from observations of the children at work and from a scrutiny of the children's records indicates that it is likely that many of the children will achieve what is normally expected for their age in language and literacy and mathematics, and some of the more able children will exceed these expectations. However, the attainment of a significant number of children will be below average. Children regularly listen to stories, talk about their ideas and feelings and enter into discussions in a wide range of play activities and are introduced to letters of the alphabet and explore writing in English and Arabic. Some children who are learning English as an additional language demonstrate understanding but are reluctant to enter into conversation. In mathematics children recite number and counting rhymes and they compare and contrast, match and sort using everyday objects. Some of the more able pupils are beginning to show an awareness of number operations such as addition and subtraction. Overall, the children are working near their capacity and achieve well when compared to their earlier attainment.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The children enjoy the activities in the nursery. They are keen to learn and most children arrive at the beginning of each session with a sense of excitement and anticipation about what they will be doing.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is generally very good. A few children who present challenging behaviour are managed very well.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. The children's personal development is good and is given high priority in the school.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Long holidays taken during school time interrupt the education of approximately 20% of the children each year.

Nursery staff provide an excellent model for the children to copy. Children are encouraged to care for others and to take responsibility when working with others and when making choices. These factors make a major contribution to the high standards of children's attitudes and their personal development.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Lessons seen overall	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching seen ranged from excellent to good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teaching was almost always very good in language and literacy and in mathematics. Teachers are very clear about what it is the children are to learn, they plan their work carefully and present their teaching in an imaginative and enthusiastic way. They

provide a good balance of teacher-directed work and child-initiated activities, and provide very positive feedback and encouragement to the children. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good as is the teaching of children who use English as a second language. Children of all abilities are challenged appropriately and this was very evident in the group teaching in language and literacy. Groups were organised on the children's ability to understand and use English. There is a strong sense of team work within the school where all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, make a significant contribution to the success of the school.

7% of the teaching seen was excellent, 43% very good and 50% good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A stimulating and broad curriculum is in place. All recommended areas of learning for children under five are taught. Imaginative contexts are used to interest and motivate the children.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There is very good provision for the children who have special educational needs. Pupils with statements are particularly well catered for. Effective procedures for assessing, recording and reporting their achievements are in place. Many pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good provision. This is a strength of the school. All staff, together with a trilingual teacher and a bilingual nursery nurse provide very good teaching and also interpret for parents, staff and children.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Clear routines, high expectations of self control and well planned group-work provide appropriate opportunities for the children's social and moral development. Many stimulating activities are provided for the children to respond to the awe and wonder of the natural world, and to celebrate the range of cultural traditions present in the community.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils very well. The children feel secure and confident and know they are valued. Child protection matters are well known by all staff.

The curriculum is documented very well. This helps the school to ensure that all children receive a balance of activities during each week and during their time in the nursery. A detailed and effective language teaching programme is in place. This provides children with teaching that carefully and thoroughly builds up the skills they need. There are no weaknesses in the provision of the curriculum. All statutory requirements are met in full.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher's leadership is outstanding and ensures a clear direction for the work of the school. High standards are promoted, a good learning ethos is established and relationships with staff and parents are excellent.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The school does not have a governing body. The work of the school is overseen by a management committee which has no statutory powers. The parent manager visits the school regularly.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's development plan is a detailed and accurate assessment of its needs. Teachers evaluate their work on a termly basis and discuss strengths and weaknesses with the headteacher. The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching and gives feedback to teachers.
The strategic use of resources	The school is well resourced. Good use is made of the school's small budget to purchase resources and to support staff development.

The headteacher ensures that a broad and stimulating curriculum is in place for all children and demonstrates her own effective teaching skills through the teaching of mathematics on a regular basis. The school cares for its pupils very well, it is a self-evaluating school and strives to continually improve the curriculum it offers. The school does not manage a delegated budget however, it applies the principles of best value to identify what action is needed to secure improvement.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is friendly and welcoming. • They are kept well informed about their children's progress. • The school is well led and managed. • The teaching is good. • Children like coming to school. • There is good support for children who have English as a second language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no commonly expressed concerns about any aspect of the school.

Thirty five parents attended the parents' meeting and 50% of parents returned the inspectors' questionnaires. Taking the responses from both sources into account, it is evident that parents are very confident in the school and are proud of it. The inspectors fully endorse the parents' very positive views of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school is led and managed very well by the headteacher.

1. The headteacher has a very clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has, in consultation with the staff, produced a very clear and well structured school development plan which identifies appropriate and achievable targets for future development. The headteacher works alongside teachers, supports and guides and gives informal feedback to them. Recently more formal observations have been made of teaching quality and teachers have been provided with written feedback. All teachers produce a written evaluation of the term's work which is discussed with the headteacher. The headteacher has established a very positive ethos in the school and knows the staff, children and parents very well.
2. The headteacher has ensured that agreed structures and ways of working are in place. Concise curriculum policy documents, agreed strategies for planning and assessment and agreed learning principles have enabled new staff to settle quickly into the school. In particular the school's structured language programme is ensuring that an appropriate curriculum for language and literacy is taught to all children. Pupils with English as an additional language benefit particularly well from the programme. Very clear information is provided for parents about the work of the nursery.
3. The school's management committee is an advisory body only. It oversees the work of five nursery schools in Bolton and does not have any statutory responsibilities. The school does not receive a delegated budget and has little flexibility in making spending decisions about staffing or premises.

The children are provided with a stimulating and broad curriculum.

4. All children have equal access to each of the nationally recommended areas of learning for children who are under five. The school places appropriate emphasis on developing the children's learning through story, conversation, play and through directed and pupil-selected activities. The children are given opportunities to explore the living world through planting seeds and growing plants, and through observing seasonal changes and changes in growth. Visits are made to places of interest, for example, a local farm, the local shops and a garden centre. Links have been made with nursery schools in France and Italy. The children have received work from the French school about the harvesting of apples. From the Italian school they have received work which the children had undertaken on vineyards and wine-making which included treading grapes and wine tasting.
5. The children's knowledge and understanding of the world is also developed well through exploring festivals from some of the major world faiths. Recently the children have explored the traditions and beliefs associated with Eid and Epiphany. The school logo is 'Celebrating Diversity' and it is evident that this motto is central to all that the school does. Regular opportunities are provided when the children can handle and talk about stimulating displays of artefacts such as a collection of metal objects. They use

information technology to explore appropriate clothing for different seasons and different times of the day. The children also use tape recorders to help develop their listening skills and also to extend their vocabulary.

6. The school successfully places considerable emphasis on developing the children's personal and social skills. The quality of their relationships and behaviour is very good. Children know how to take turns, they listen well to the teacher during directed activities and show initiative and perseverance when working on their own ideas. The children's creative and physical development is above average. Pupils use their imagination well in response to music, art, drama and dance and imaginative play and have regular opportunities to develop their awareness of space and manipulative skills in indoor and outdoor activities. A group of children were engaged in a teacher-directed activity which required them to observe a range of types of bread. They were encouraged to observe closely, match paint colour and to paint pictures observing closely. Some of the resulting work was above average for children of their age.

Pupils who are learning English as an additional language make particularly good progress.

7. Pupils' records indicate that children with English as an additional language make very good progress during their time in the nursery. However, many pupils have an understanding of spoken English but are reluctant to enter into conversation. Children's progress is monitored carefully in individual profiles. Targets for each child's improvement are set and are communicated to the parents on a regular basis. Appropriate emphasis is given to developing the children's ability to use English to communicate socially. The structured English programme ensures that children are introduced to the essential vocabulary to help them to understand and enjoy stories.
8. In a lesson with a group of children who had little spoken English, the teacher was reading the story of Mrs Wishy Washy. Artefacts such as a bucket, a brush, and an apron were used to maintain the children's interest and to illustrate some of the features of the story. New vocabulary, which is identified in the school's language programme, was introduced to the children. The story was read in English but the trilingual teacher very ably prompted the children in Gujarati and Urdu to check their understanding. She gave them very positive feedback about their work and praised their efforts for attempting to use new vocabulary. This type of teaching was of the highest quality, it maintained the children's interest and understanding so that they were able to make sense of the story and enjoy the humour.
9. A bilingual nursery nurse from the Local Education Authority's multicultural service was playing a picture lotto game with a small group of children. She questioned the children in English and in Urdu and Gujarati and was enthusiastic and positive when the children responded. She encouraged them and used every opportunity to extend the children's responses:

"That's right it's a picture of a bike.... What colour is it?... Yes it's yellow... Have you got a bike at home?... What can you tell me about your bike?"

10. The members of staff or students who are bilingual frequently and discretely move from what they are doing into a situation where they identify the need to interpret. This was evident in a situation where children were asked to express their preferences when tasting breakfast cereals. One child did not understand the question and following a brief interjection from a student who interpreted for him, he smiled and pointed to his favourite cereal.

The school communicates very well with parents.

11. The school provides clear leaflets on all areas of its work and distributes these as and when it wants to draw parents and carers attention to various aspects of the curriculum. Recently the school has sent home information about the number rhymes the children will be using. Regular newsletters inform the parents about a range of events. They also provide information about occasions when parents can come into the nursery to talk to staff about their child's progress and to look at their records and samples of work. Parents are also given information about the simple targets which the nursery staff have identified for the children and parents are encouraged to work on these targets with their children at home. Frequently one of the bilingual members of staff will explain the content of letters to a parent who may require some help in translation.
12. Information from the parents' questionnaires, the parents' meeting and from discussions with parents indicates that they are proud of the reputation which the nursery has locally. They value the teaching their children receive and respect the headteacher's style of management. Parents are able to talk about improvements which the school has made to the curriculum during the past two years and appreciate the way in which the school cares for their children.
13. Some parents attend a community education project which is held in the nursery. The project is organised by Bolton College and provides opportunities for parents to consider a range of issues relating to child development.

The quality of teaching is consistently good and often very good.

14. Teaching is planned carefully in accordance with a clearly structured programme of work. A very good balance of teacher-led tasks and pupil-initiated activities is in place for all pupils. Good quality play activities are resourced appropriately and are maintained well by adult intervention as and when necessary. In language and literacy work the children are grouped according to their ability to speak and understand English. The activities undertaken within these groups are matched very well to their abilities. For example, during a mathematics session with children who had a good understanding of English the children were able to identify and talk about common two-dimensional shapes and could sort the shapes by the number of sides and most of the children could count to 30. Effective teaching provides appropriate challenges for all, including the most able children.
15. All of the teaching observed was planned thoroughly with clear objectives. Teachers had the confidence to follow a child's interests when appropriate. Much of the teaching is delivered in an interesting and imaginative manner which engenders a sense of anticipation in the children. For example, when a group was about to settle to listen to the story of the Hungry Caterpillar the teacher said: *"I think there's something hiding in this cupboard*

and if you're very quiet he might come out..." The teacher then proceeded to bring out a large, soft, toy caterpillar and wooden cut-outs of the fruit eaten by the caterpillar. The children listened attentively to the story, handled the caterpillar carefully and took turns in placing the food eaten by the caterpillar onto a magnetic board. The story was presented to the children very imaginatively and the children practised sequencing the events in the story.

16. All adults establish good relationships with the children. They expend considerable energy utilising every opportunity to talk to the children individually and in groups and to help them make sense of the language used in a lesson. All adults also place considerable importance on fostering the children's personal and social development. A regular feature of the teaching is the way in which adults boost the children's self-esteem by giving them encouragement and positive feedback about their work.
17. The teaching of children with statements of special educational needs is targeted well. Regular assessments enable teachers to know what the children need to do next and the children generally make good progress. Careful records are maintained and individual education plans are updated regularly. Currently the school's staffing allocation only provides special nursery nurse support time for pupils with a statement of special educational needs.

Assessment, recording and reporting procedures are used very well to set appropriate and challenging tasks for all children.

18. Effective arrangements are in place to ensure that the children are assessed on entry to the nursery. Regular observations and assessments made by nursery staff are used to build a profile of each child during her/his time in the nursery. The accumulated evidence in the profile is used to set simple targets for the next steps in the child's development. Parents are invited to come into school each term to talk to a teacher about their child's progress and to review the child's individual record folders. A written, end-of-year summary report is given to parents and to receiving schools. Assessments of the children's understanding of English are used to group the children for language and literacy activities. This assessment procedure, together with the implementation of a very effective language teaching programme, ensures that most pupils make good progress in learning English as an additional language.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school is allocated insufficient secretarial time and there is no funded provision for supervising the children who are full-time and stay at the school for their lunch.

19. This is a very good school with no major shortcomings. However, the headteacher, who is a highly skilled professional, has to undertake too many routine duties because the school has only 12 hours administrative support per week and there is no provision in the school's staffing for a lunch-time supervisory assistant. The school works closely with a range of agencies on child protection and child welfare matters which means that the headteacher is frequently involved in case conferences which take place off the school premises. Frequently, on these occasions, there are no members of staff available to deal with

parental enquiries and teaching programmes have to be interrupted in order that a member of staff can be released to deal with a child's illness or other emergencies.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

20. The school's management committee should pursue with the Local Education Authority the availability of funding to improve this aspect of the school's staffing.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	14
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	6

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7	43	50	0	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	61
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	20

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	80

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	8.8

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.3

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	109

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7.6
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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No delegated budget.

	£
Total income	13919
Total expenditure	15800
Expenditure per pupil	132
Balance brought forward from previous year	00
Balance carried forward to next year	-1881

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	111
Number of questionnaires returned	54

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	80	19	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	70	30	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	76	24	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	40	6	2	0
The teaching is good.	85	13	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	88	10	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89	11	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	79	17	0	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	75	25	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	85	15	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	79	19	0	0	2

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

66	28	2	0	4
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