



Valley Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104137
LEA Walsall
Inspection number 277081
Inspection dates 22 May 2006 to 22 May 2006
Reporting inspector John Eadie AI

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Blakenall Heath
School category	Community		Blakenall
Age range of pupils	3 to 4		Walsall, West Midlands WS3 1HT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01922 710518
Number on roll	79	Fax number	01922 710518
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2000	Headteacher	Ms Dawn Kelly

Age group 3 to 4	Inspection dates 22 May 2006 - 22 May 2006	Inspection number 277081
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized nursery is in an area of significant deprivation near the centre of Walsall. It provides integrated care and nursery education. The associated childcare centre is open for 50 weeks in the year. The school extends its provision to family support and training. There is also a variety of other services for the community provided in conjunction with a wide range of partnerships, in particular Surestart Blakenall, who share the same site. Most children have well below the expected levels of skills when they start at the school, particularly in language and number. Almost all children are White British and all speak English at home.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Valley is a good nursery school, held in high regard by the community it serves. It provides good value for money. The school also judges itself as good. Children achieve well and enjoy their learning. By the time they leave to start in a Reception class, the majority have made good progress towards reaching the levels expected for their age and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Despite this good overall progress, children's standards lag behind a little in language and in some aspects of their mathematical development, and the new system for tracking children's progress has not yet been in place long enough to resolve this relative weakness. The school provides a wide range of effective services to support the whole family. Liaison between the school and its partners, for example the Surestart Programme and health services, is very successful. The very high quality of these partnerships contributes significantly to the good standard of care provided to children and to their learning.

The staff are committed to providing a stimulating and inclusive environment where all children can develop into confident, self-motivated learners. Good relationships are built from an early stage but there is not always a consistent approach from staff in encouraging these relationships or safe practices. Teaching is predominantly good. Occasionally, teaching is satisfactory when, for example, staff miss opportunities to develop fully children's language skills. There is a good curriculum, which is carefully planned with children's interests and needs in mind.

The school rigorously evaluates its performance and its improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities to develop further its provision. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and demonstrates a good capacity for continued improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the new assessment systems to raise standards in children's language and mathematical development.
- Improve the consistency of practice so that children learn more effectively how to stay safe, take turns and listen to each other.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well. Most children have skills that are well below those expected for their age when they start at the school. Their language skills are particularly weak. During their time at the school, they make good progress as a result of the quality of care and education they receive. This includes children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Learning is purposeful and children are successful in meeting their appropriately challenging targets. Children learn to listen carefully, develop good concentration and make good gains in their skills and particularly in their personal development. Their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) and

their physical skills have developed especially well by the time they leave to join a Reception class. However, children's progress is slower in language and calculation.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development, including their moral and social development, is good and prepares them well for primary school. Spiritual and cultural development is very good and children show respect for their own and other cultures. The positive atmosphere of the school helps children to develop their confidence and self-esteem. As one parent wrote, 'My daughter's confidence has really grown well and her learning skills have come on brilliantly.' Children enjoy coming to school. They settle quickly into routines and participate enthusiastically in the activities provided. For example, one boy was fully engaged in creating a sunflower for a lengthy period, choosing his materials with care and discrimination. Children willingly accept responsibilities, such as being a helper for the day. They are also enabled to take part in decision making, for example by contributing ideas for the design of the school gate.

Children's behaviour is good as a result of the calm atmosphere generated by staff. Children generally share willingly, take turns and show consideration for others. They also show respect for living creatures and handle the caterpillars in school with care. However, a few children interrupt others and do not listen attentively because these skills are not consistently promoted. Very occasionally children move too quickly and do not pay sufficient attention to safety. Children form positive relationships with all adults and each other. The majority of children attend regularly. They are developing a good awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle and enjoy the healthy snacks the school provides. They know that exercise is good for them and that germs from dirty hands can make you ill!

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and children are learning well. Staff support the children effectively, helping them to take part in creative, sensory and outdoor activities at their own level. Planning is thorough and children benefit from the choice of activities available. Staff give children good opportunities to choose from a range of related activities. Children's independence and self-esteem are developed well through making these choices. Basic competence in ICT is developed very well as staff provide a wide range of opportunities for children to build these skills. Opportunities are sometimes missed to reinforce children's language development. For example, there are times when staff ask questions which require only a one word answer and when there is insufficient modelling of good use of language.

Staff observe and assess the children regularly. As a result, adults know the children well and are sensitive to their individual needs. The new system for tracking individual

children's progress is good. However, it has not been in place for long enough, so staff have only recently begun to adapt their planning to address relative weaknesses.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. A wide programme of activities is carefully planned, which extends children's experiences and meets their learning needs. There is a good balance between activities children choose themselves and those led by adults. These support the development of independence whilst ensuring children make good progress. The development of communication, language and literacy is occasionally hindered as children's language development is not built on enough throughout the curriculum. Children's personal and social development is successfully promoted through circle time and other day-to-day activities. The curriculum is enriched by very good provision for the outdoor curriculum and a wide variety of visits, for example to the zoo, safari park and seaside, as well as good use of the local environment. It is further enhanced by a number of visitors, for example, a visiting artist.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The level of care, support and guidance provided for children is good and contributes to their good progress and personal development. It is promoted successfully by close liaison with external partners and other agencies. Together with partners, the school provides good levels of support for the whole family. For example, some parents are helped to get children to school on time. Robust systems are in place to ensure children's health, safety and well-being and the school provides a safe and secure environment. Children are known well by adults, and as a result they are able to respond quickly when children are upset or need extra help. The 'nurture group' provides good support for children with emotional needs. It promotes the growth of self-esteem and the development of learning skills. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are given good additional support, which contributes to the good progress they make. The tracking of children's progress is good, but the recently introduced system is not yet fully embedded. All children receive home visits before they start school, which helps them to settle in well, and there are good arrangements for transfer to primary school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is passionate about children's well-being and learning. Her clear vision is shared by her deputy and there is a strong sense of shared responsibility right across the whole staff. They work very effectively together to secure quality care and educational provision. The use made of external partners, such as the adjoining Surestart, is extremely effective in supporting families and involving parents and carers in the education of their children.

Governors are very committed and actively involved in the work of the school. Their committees operate efficiently and keep them well informed. Finances are managed very carefully and the headteacher is very good at accessing funds from a variety of sources to improve provision for the children; the work on training for parents is a good example. The school's rigorous self-evaluation provides an accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development. Monitoring is thorough, although areas for development are not always sufficiently precisely noted. Parents, who are overwhelmingly positive about the school, are consulted regularly. Their suggestions led to a well attended first aid course for parents, as a result of which one parent was able to use her new knowledge in an emergency. Children's views are also valued and they have created a design for new gates and fencing. The school has a well thought out plan for further improving the quality and range of services it provides. The good quality of its leadership and management indicates that the school is well placed to continue to improve in the future.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	NA
Learners are educated about sexual health	NA
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I have asked Miss Kelly to read you this letter. We really enjoyed our time at your school and looking at all the super work that you do.

We think these are the best things about your school.

You love coming to school, behave well and enjoy everything that you do.

All the grown-ups look after you really well.

You have lots of interesting things to do.

Your school is very well organised.

There are lots of activities for mums, dads and families too.

We have asked the teachers to do these things.

Help you to make your language and number work better.

Help you to know how to stay safe, take turns and listen to each other.

Yours faithfully

John D Eadie Lead Inspector