



Featherstone Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103139
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286571
Inspection date 11 January 2007
Reporting inspector Melvyn Hemmings

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	29 Highcroft Road
School category	Maintained		Erdington
Age range of pupils	3-5		Birmingham B23 6AU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 3733191
Number on roll (school)	66	Fax number	0121 3864186
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Martin Aldridge
		Headteacher	Elaine Dupree
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school offers 70 full-time places, with children being admitted in the September after their third birthday. A purpose-built Children's Centre has been developed on site and is to open soon, providing day care for children aged 0 to 3 years. There is a high percentage of children whose first language is other than English and five of these are at an early stage of learning English. Between 2004 and 2005 the school went through significant disruption due to three changes of headship and the long-term absence of the deputy headteacher. The current headteacher has been in post for just over a year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Featherstone is a very friendly and caring school that provides children with a satisfactory standard of education. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher it has successfully overcome the significant disruption to learning in 2004 to 2005. As a result, the school is now a calm and settled environment for children to learn and play. This is recognised by parents, who are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One captured the views of many by writing, 'The school is obviously improving and I would highly recommend other parents to send their children to it.'

A strength of the school is the good personal development and well-being of children. This stems from the high priority placed on this aspect as more children are entering school with fewer social skills than at the last inspection. Children settle quickly into school routines and are well behaved, friendly and eager to learn. Because of this, children achieve well in their personal and social development and by the time they leave school their attainment in this area exceeds expectations. In all other areas of learning, standards are in line with expectations and children's achievement is satisfactory. Well targeted support is given to children with learning difficulties and disabilities and those whose first language is other than English. Consequently, they take full part in all activities and achieve satisfactorily. Good attention is paid to children's care, support and guidance and this is another strong aspect of the school's work. Children feel safe and secure in school and form trusting relationships with others. Procedures for checking their progress are satisfactory but the information collected is not always used effectively by staff to guide them in improving their work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall with a strong team ethos having been developed over the last year. However, some staff are not clear about their specific roles and responsibilities in supporting children's learning. The headteacher's effective management has enabled the development of the Children's Centre to proceed well. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with good relationships fostering an enjoyable setting for learning. However, session planning tends to focus more on the activities children are to do rather than what they are to learn. This results in children who are not always clear about what they are expected to learn. The curriculum is satisfactory and based upon a free flow system that encourages children to make choices about when they are involved in some activities. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The school's track record over the previous year shows there is secure capacity to make any necessary improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the planning of sessions by focusing more on what children are to learn rather than just the activity they are to do.
- Ensure all staff are aware of their specific roles and responsibilities in helping children learn.
- Develop the use of assessment information by staff to more effectively guide children to improve their performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The attainment of most children on entry to the school is as expected for their age. Their achievement is satisfactory in most areas of learning, apart from personal, social and emotional development, which is good. They listen to stories with enjoyment and are confident in asking simple questions. However, their skills in speaking are hindered at times when staff do not encourage them to talk enough in groups or when taking part in discussions. Their knowledge and understanding of the world is enhanced by a good range of visits and visitors and this helps them gain a secure understanding of life outside school. Children make good progress in their personal and social skills and so are well behaved, work well with others and eager to do well. By the time they leave school, children are on target to meet the expected standards in most areas of learning and to exceed them in personal and social development.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

A strong emphasis is placed on children's personal, social and emotional development and, as a result, they become independent, confident learners, readily accepting guidance. Children are developing an important range of skills, such as initiative, cooperation and perseverance that will help them in their future education and the world of work. They behave well and are clearly happy in the Nursery, with relationships between themselves and adults being good. Children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. They show care and consideration for each other and share toys and other resources fairly. Children's attendance is satisfactory. They work hard, enjoy their activities and make a positive contribution to the community. Children have a good understanding of how to keep safe and are careful when using a range of equipment. They are also developing an understanding of the importance of keeping healthy, such as by eating fruit at snack times and taking part in a variety of physical activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Staff interact well with children and give them plenty of support but also encourage them to be independent learners. Relationships are good and children have positive attitudes to their learning. They work well collaboratively in pairs and small groups. Activities are interesting and in most cases practical so that children maintain their concentration and enjoy what they do. Good use is made of the role-play areas, such as the 'Building Yard', to enthuse children and develop their understanding of the wider world. Sometimes, opportunities are missed to extend children's speaking skills, such as by not encouraging them to answer questions or discuss their learning using

short sentences rather than just one word. Session planning concentrates too much on what children are to do rather than what they are to learn. Children who are at an early stage of learning English are given extra specialist support to enable them to take full part in activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Recent changes have made the curriculum more relevant to children, as many activities are now developed from the children's own interests. There is an appropriate balance between adult directed and child initiated activities. Provision for physical activities outdoors extends children's skills well. Effective use is made of other facilities close by while building work is ongoing. The curriculum is enriched with a broad range of visits and visitors. These are used well to develop children's learning and broaden their horizons. As parents and siblings often accompany children on these visits they act as a good link between home and school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a supportive and secure environment and staff are successful in building trusting relationships with the children. All staff are aware of the needs of individual children and are very committed to ensuring their health and safety while in school. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are fully in place and adults have a good understanding of their responsibilities in these areas. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that their children feel safe and well cared for. The friendly atmosphere and personal care children receive effectively supports the progress they make and their good personal and social development. The procedures for monitoring children's academic development have been improved over the last year and are now secure. However, the information gathered is not always used effectively by staff to guide them to improve their work. There is good liaison with parents and outside agencies to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities and those whose first language is other than English.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a perceptive awareness of the needs of the school and has led a variety of initiatives to successfully improve provision. For example, the procedures for checking the progress that children make are now thorough and provide a sound basis for setting challenging targets for improvement. All staff share the headteacher's vision and are keen to see children achieve as well as they can. However, more needs to be done to make sure that assessment information is used consistently by staff to help children improve their performance. The senior management team has a secure overview of the school's strengths and the areas that require development. This is reflected in the schools' accurate self-evaluation. However, some members of staff

are unsure about their specific roles and responsibilities in supporting children's learning. This has been correctly identified as a priority area for development in the school's improvement plan. Performance management has been improved and is now linked well to school improvement and staff professional development. The governing body are enthusiastic, very supportive and willing to ask challenging questions about the decisions of senior managers.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We really enjoyed our visit to your Nursery last week. It was good to see how well behaved you are and the way you enjoy the many interesting things you are given to do. All the grown-ups are proud of you and take good care of you. Your school is a very friendly place in which to learn and play. We especially like the way you care for each other and share things so fairly. Your mums and dads are pleased with everything that goes on and we can see why.

There are three things we think your Nursery needs to do now. These are:

- The adults need to make sure that you always know what you are expected to learn.
- Adults need to learn more about the different things they can do to help you learn more effectively.
- Use all the information adults gather about your progress to help you do even better.

Thank you for such a lovely day and we hope you keep on enjoying the work you do.