



Sandbank Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104134
Local Authority Walsall
Inspection number 286863
Inspection dates 8–9 March 2007
Reporting inspector Peter Allen

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Elmore Row
School category	Maintained		Bloxwich
Age range of pupils	3–4		Walsall WS3 2HR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01922 710132
Number on roll (school)	120	Fax number	01922 408488
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Sue Lemm
		Headteacher	Rita Thornbery
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2001		

Age group 3–4	Inspection dates 8–9 March 2007	Inspection number 286863
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Children join the school shortly after their third birthday for a period of up to six terms, attending either morning or afternoon. A wide range of facilities are provided in association with the school, including full day registered childcare for two- to four-year-olds, a 'before and after' school club which includes pupils from the nearby primary school and part-time, pre-nursery provision. The school achieved the Healthy Schools Award in 2004 and the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Sandbank Nursery School gives its children an outstanding start to their education. It enjoys the overwhelming confidence, appreciation and support of the parents. The school has a profound impact on the lives of the children. One parent expressed heartfelt appreciation for 'carving my little rough diamond and making him a precious gem'. Children show high levels of enjoyment and enthusiasm and their varying needs are well met because they receive exceptionally good care, guidance and support, the curriculum is excellent because it grabs their imagination and teaching is outstanding. The high quality of this provision is the outcome of outstanding leadership and management and excellent teamwork. Standards are above those expected for this age. Achievement is excellent for children of all abilities, although the progress made in mathematical development is not as marked as progress across the other areas of learning. Children are happy and confident learners. They come into the start of sessions excited to meet their friends and the staff. The environment is rich in language, art and artefacts and is successfully planned to meet children's needs. High quality care, guidance and support results in excellent personal development and well-being. Children's progress is monitored closely, partly through the outstanding individual profiles ('learning journeys'). Any difficulties children experience in their learning are addressed quickly. As a consequence, children make exceptional progress and associate learning with having fun. Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's vision to provide the best for every child is shared by a team of talented professionals. Self-evaluation is used well to identify where improvements can be made and then put them into effect. Procedures to ensure children's safety and well-being are thorough and rigorously implemented. Children know how to keep healthy and safe because of the clear guidance by the staff about hygiene and healthy eating. All these elements taken together mean that the school provides very good value for money and shows an extremely good capacity for continued improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in mathematical development to match those in the other areas of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

There is a wide range of ability evident in each group of children admitted but, overall, children start Nursery with standards that are below those expected nationally. A significant minority have speech and language difficulties. All children make exceptionally good progress. Children with learning difficulties achieve as well as others because they are supported extremely well. By the time they leave Nursery, standards are above those expected for this age with children performing best in the communication, language and literacy, personal, social and emotional and creative areas of learning. Recent assessments have shown that progress is slightly less in

mathematical development. The school works very successfully in ensuring that boys' attainment is very similar to girls. Children use computers, interactive whiteboards and digital cameras very confidently. They enjoy being in the fresh air, developing their physical skills well through active play, which they know is good for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The children's outstanding personal development is reflected in their great enthusiasm and love of school. They are too busy learning to do anything other than behave very well. Their attendance records are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Children benefit from many opportunities to reflect on their experiences, such as when they showed awe and wonder at giant land snails coming out of their shells. Children gain insights into the wider world when they celebrate festivals such as Eid, Diwali, Chinese New Year and Easter. Children are very happy to help others; for example, following the visit of a 'dragon' from a children's charity, they raised money for those less fortunate through a sponsored walk. Children show a good awareness of how to keep safe, for example when playing in the 'dabble pool'. They are happy to say what they think and enjoy very good opportunities to take responsibility, such as when they order materials from a catalogue and go to the local pet shop to buy fish. Children's growing confidence and independence, together with their overall basic skills, prepare them well for their next stage of education and their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Children learn exceptionally well because the staff have a very good understanding of how young children learn. They carefully plan activities that are exciting and imaginative and then provide the support and encouragement that lead to successful learning. Because of consistently very good, and in many cases outstanding, teaching children make excellent progress over time. Staff are skilled at developing and increasing children's vocabulary, at developing imaginative play and at setting up problem-solving activities which successfully challenge the children and extend their thinking. An excellent system of assessment highlights where each child is in their development. This information is used well to plan the next steps in learning. A review of standards has led to staff increasing the focus on mathematical activities and on extending mathematical vocabulary. Staff are excellent at promoting cooperation and the sharing of ideas. In searching for 'buried treasure' outdoors one child explained to another, 'You need X marks the spot because it's in every pirate map'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Parents value the school's outstanding curriculum. 'The range of materials, activities and opportunities to learn is phenomenal,' said one. When children arrive there is an 'Aladdin's cave' of learning opportunities imaginatively arranged to engage children, often through using their senses and the environment. The curriculum is skilfully planned and adapted to meet the needs of all children. Curriculum enrichment is outstanding. Many visitors and visits, such as ones to the library, the market and the art gallery, are used well. Creative experiences gained from working with a visiting artist and a musician make a significant contribution to the children's high achievements. Personal and social development underpins all activities, with children gaining a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise. The curriculum has a very positive impact on children's achievement, their personal development and their love of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is a very caring school with staff who are very committed to the children. Procedures for safeguarding children are very thorough and consistently applied. Productive partnerships with outside agencies and the excellent partnership with parents ensure that children are extremely well cared for and are receiving high quality support and guidance. 'I know my child is happy and content and I can leave him knowing he will be safe and well looked after', said one parent, summing up the views held by all those consulted. The staff know the children well and make very good use of the excellent assessment information to gain a very accurate picture of each child's progress. Regular reviews, including those at weekly 'reflection' meetings, mean that staff are well informed to provide very good support and guidance to enhance the learning and personal development of every single child.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The outstanding and inspirational leadership of the experienced headteacher is the driving force behind the success of this school, which is used by the local authority to provide training in the best of practice. The school strives for excellence in all aspects of its work and its aspirations are fully supported by all staff and governors. There is a team approach with a shared vision of supporting the achievement and well-being of each child. Effective self-evaluation means that the school knows itself well, although it is too modest in its evaluation of its effectiveness. The analysis of data on attainment across the areas of learning is used well to review the relative strengths and weaknesses. This has led to the identification of the need to improve children's performance in mathematics. The school has an excellent partnership with the other elements of provision, most notably the adjacent pre-nursery unit. Governors are supportive of

the school with an informed view of its performance. The high level of parental support reflects their recognition that the school is very well led and managed and successfully strives to provide the very best for their children.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Thank you for all those smiles you gave me when I visited your lovely nursery. I really enjoyed watching you play. It was good to see how very well behaved you are and I especially liked how well you share things and take turns and the way you care for each other. You told me how much you enjoy being at nursery because it is very friendly, there is lots to do and you have great fun. I know that Mrs Thornbery and the staff work very hard and look after you very well. They take very good care of each of you and make sure you know how to be healthy, fit and safe. They teach you very well and provide lots and lots of interesting things for you to do so that you learn a lot whilst you play. I have asked them to give you more opportunities to learn about numbers and practise counting. Your parents are very pleased with everything that goes on and so am I. The nursery staff are right to be proud of you. I hope you continue to enjoy every single day at your excellent nursery. Thank you for letting me share in all the wonderful things you were doing.