

Woodfield Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119088
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	291313
Inspection date	17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Carole Cressey

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3-4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kathleen Bennett
Headteacher	Mrs Rosalind Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2003
School address	Sefton Street Brierfield Nelson Lancashire BB9 5BE
Telephone number	01282 614636
Fax number	01282 614636

Age group	3-4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The local area has a relatively high level of social deprivation. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average. Most children come from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly from Asian heritage families. A small number are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The majority of children have English as an additional language. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for two terms.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Woodfield Nursery is a satisfactory and improving school that provides satisfactory value for money. It has an accurate insight into its strengths and weaknesses and believes itself to be satisfactory. The inspection matches the school's judgement of itself, but also notes that it has some good features. Aspects of leadership and management are good. The very clear vision and expert knowledge of the headteacher fuels her determination to provide the best quality of provision for the children and their families. Governors are supportive of the school, but are unclear about their role in implementing change to improve the nursery.

The majority of parents are happy with the school and are pleased with the wide range of experiences their children have. One parent wrote, 'I love the way the nursery allows the children to explore what they are interested in. Not restricting them, they allow them to try to do things their way. They have surpassed my expectations'. However, a few parents are unsure about how some recent changes in the school will improve their children's progress.

Children enter the nursery with low standards in all aspects of their development. They make satisfactory progress, but only a few meet the standards expected for their age by the time they leave. The headteacher has quickly identified that children could do better and has set about changing the learning ethos to accelerate learning and achievement and raise standards. Staff provide good levels of care and understand how difficult the transition from home to school can be for many of the children. Parents are encouraged to stay until their children are happy and settled and bilingual staff are on hand to provide reassurance in children's home language. As a result, personal development and well-being are good and children become confident and independent learners. Children arrive happily at school and eagerly skip off to select an interesting activity and become absorbed in learning through play. They confidently prepare their own very healthy snacks. Playing outside is a firm favourite. Even on a wet and windy day children cannot wait to don their wellington boots and waterproofs so they can benefit from the fresh air and exercise in the stimulating outside classroom.

The teaching and curriculum are satisfactory. Staff provide a wide range of interesting tasks, which engage all children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in experimenting and learning through play. The headteacher has begun to redeploy bilingual and dedicated support staff to improve the help for children with English as an additional language. Although staff support and encourage children well, they are not always clear about precisely what children are expected to learn from their activities, consequently children do not always learn as well as they could. The school's picture of children's progress lacks detail and is not good enough to plan the next steps in learning. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and the high levels of care and personal development have been maintained. The recent improvements to teaching, learning and the curriculum illustrate that the school has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that planning informs staff of precisely what children are expected to learn and ensures that learning activities are well matched to the different needs of the children.
- Develop assessment systems which inform staff of children's attainment and progress and help them identify the next stages in learning.
- Develop the role of Governors so they are clear about how they can support and challenge the school.

- Strengthen parents' knowledge and understanding about the value of changes being implemented in the school.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The majority of children start nursery with limited skills, especially in literacy, numeracy and personal and social development; overall their development is below what is typically found for children of their age. Once settled in nursery the wide range of learning activities enable all children to become eager learners and they make satisfactory progress. However, by the time they leave, standards remain below expectations. Most children could do better if the learning activities were better matched to their needs. The emphasis on personal development is rightly seen as a priority and as a result children make good progress in becoming confident, sociable individuals.

Children make satisfactory progress in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. They enjoy mark making and are learning to recognise and write their names. Children enjoy counting the number of children present every day, singing number rhymes and learning about size and order through their play. Children with English as an additional language receive appropriate support from bilingual staff and they too make satisfactory progress. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress towards their targets because of the individual support they receive. Boys and girls make similar progress because staff are increasingly aware of their different learning needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development and well-being are good as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children and their parents are welcome at the start of each session and as a result children enjoy coming to school and behave very well. The school is gaining success in improving punctuality at the start of sessions and in reducing incidents of children being taken out of school early or staying at home unnecessarily.

As soon as children enter the nursery, their enthusiasm is evident. Children who were once reluctant to leave their parents happily dash off, for example, to see if the beans they recently planted have started to grow. Activities are thoughtfully planned and organised so that children learn to wait their turn, to cooperate and to select and clear away their own resources. They work very well together and on their own, maintaining high levels of concentration in their various learning activities. Some children, however, can become restless when groups are too large. Children work safely and use knives, scissors, paintbrushes and pencils with increasing skill and confidence. Children get off to a good start in understanding how to stay healthy. Snack time is a daily feast of different fruits, vegetables, flavours and textures all prepared by the children themselves. The indoor and outdoor environments support and extend children's spontaneous play and need for space to run, jump and climb.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. Staff are successfully encouraging children to become independent and eager learners. They encourage children to make choices and to explore new experiences; such as, with clay, sand, water and soil. Activities are varied and well organised and there is a good balance between tasks that children choose for themselves and those directed by the staff. Wherever possible, children handle real materials and staff are on hand to encourage and support children in either English or their home language. Recent training is helping staff, including those who are bilingual, to become more confident in asking children questions and helping them with their replies. However, there are too many missed opportunities to extend and accelerate children's learning. This is because planning lacks sufficient detail about what different groups and individuals are expected to learn from the tasks. Staff do not use their assessments rigorously enough to pinpoint each child's progress and carefully identify the next steps in learning. Parents welcome being involved in their children's education. They enjoy reading the achievement books displayed in the corridors and helping children with their homework tasks.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with significant strengths in personal and social development. This enables children to learn how to stay safe and healthy and develop a caring attitude not only to each other but also to their environment. Caring for their garden by planting lawn seeds and regularly watering their plants helps children become responsible members of their school community. The new leadership is rightly developing a curriculum that is led by children's own interests. The staff are becoming much more familiar and confident in using the nationally recommended Early Years curriculum. As a result, children are provided, indoors and outdoors, with plenty of opportunities, which capture their interests and promote their literacy, numeracy and creative and physical development. Enrichment through visits to the locality are widening children's horizons and broadening their knowledge and understanding of the world. However, there is still some way to go to ensure that planning meets fully the specific needs of the children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Arrangements to safeguard pupils meet all statutory requirements. Health and safety routines and risk assessments are effective and conscientiously observed. For most children, starting nursery can be daunting because it is their first venture outside of their home. The staff are very aware of this and successfully create a warm and caring environment, which helps children feel secure and happy and reassures parents that their children are safe and well cared for. Staff quickly identify children with learning or behaviour difficulties and deploy staff well to ensure that they get the extra help they need. There are always plenty of staff on hand to work alongside children, ensuring their safety and enjoyment, but they are not yet skilled enough in guiding and supporting children so that they achieve as well as they can.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The newly appointed headteacher shows good leadership and has a clear vision for improving the school. Her observations of teaching and learning have accurately identified the need to improve planning and assessments and provide children with opportunities to learn through play and investigation. The skills of teachers, assistants and bilingual staff are all being enhanced through training in the Early Years curriculum, provision for children learning English as an additional language and by visiting other schools to share good practice. The headteacher has opted for a heavy teaching role in order to work alongside staff to help improve teaching. As a result, the provision is already improving. The quality of activities are better organised and accessible to young learners, old and jaded resources have been updated to engage young learners' imagination and furniture has been rearranged to enable more interaction between staff and learners so that the children's interests can be pursued. The governors are supportive of the school, but are unclear about their role in strategic planning and in being a critical friend. Most parents are happy with the school, but some are concerned at the changes which have taken place and are unsure about how the changes will help their children.

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Annex A

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?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
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	2

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?	3

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.

Annex A

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	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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

18 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Woodfield Nursery School, Lancashire, BB9 5BE

I really liked being at your nursery school for a day. It was lovely to see you learning and playing with all the grown ups and with each other.

These are the best things about your school.

- Your behaviour is really good and you are learning to take turns and share toys with each other.
- You understand the importance of eating healthy fruit and vegetables and playing outside in the fresh air.
- There is a lot to do and you really enjoy all the games and activities that your teachers get ready for you.
- The staff care about you and keep you safe.
- The outside area and garden are good and are going to be even better when the grass seeds and flowers you planted grow.

I have asked your headteacher to do a few things to make your nursery even better.

They are to:

- show the grown ups how to get even better at helping you, so that you become really clever
- tell your mums and dads more about the exciting things you do in school.

Yours sincerely

Carole Cressey

Lead inspector