

Brunel Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119092
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	291314
Inspection dates	3–4 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Patricia Garraway
Headteacher	Mrs Dorothy M Holden
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2001
School address	Cambridge Street Blackburn Lancashire BB1 1HN
Telephone number	01254 265433
Fax number	01254 265433

Age group	3–4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This Nursery school serves an ethnically diverse community in an urban area of Blackburn. It offers part-time places for children over the age of three. When they enter the Nursery, children's development is below that typical for children of this age. A high percentage of children are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The majority of pupils are of Indian or Pakistani heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Brunel Nursery judges itself as a good school and inspection findings agree with this. It has a good reputation and provides good value for money. The school has established good partnerships with parents, other schools and outside agencies which extend children's experiences and support their learning well.

Progress is good across the six areas of learning and is very good in some aspects. When children start school, their development is generally below that usually seen and a high percentage of children are learning English as an additional language. By the end of the year, most children are working within the expectations for their age having achieved a broad foundation on which to build their future education.

Children learn well because teaching is good. Tasks are organised around themes with different layouts and activities each day. This captures children's interests very well and they often take an exploratory tour of the rooms before deciding upon their first activity of the session. Progress is constantly assessed and adults use the results to plan the next steps or 'targets'. Children work through these during adult-directed sessions; as a result, they make very good progress in language work and personal development. Learning in mathematical understanding has improved and is good, but is not as rapid as in these other two core areas. Progress in creative, physical work and in understanding the world around is good because adults skilfully guide children in their choice of activity to ensure a balance of experiences. A constant emphasis on oral work and communication benefits all children. The bilingual assistants provide sensitive support in mother tongue to ensure that new vocabulary and concepts are understood.

Parents have positive views of the nursery and appreciate the opportunities to talk informally with staff at the start and end of each session. They have regular, useful newsletters and receive feedback about their children's progress at the end of the year. However, there are no formal reports on children's progress during the year and no systems for sharing children's 'targets' so parents can help at home.

Children are well informed about healthy living; they take good advantage of opportunities for exercise in the outdoor classroom and eat 'healthy snacks'. Personal development is a strength. Behaviour is very good; children enjoy their learning and are prepared to persevere with tasks. This prepares them very well for their future education and results in a very pleasant and purposeful nursery atmosphere. Pupils learn about each others' faiths and cultures and celebrate a variety of festivals throughout the year. This supports the harmonious community feel in school.

Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Under the good leadership of the headteacher, this school is constantly moving forward. Development planning is largely derived from any relative weakness identified through the assessment and analysis of children's progress. Attention to safety issues, including checking on the suitability of staff and helpers, is very good. The school has a good capacity to improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve learning in mathematical understanding to match the very good progress seen in communication and language and literacy and in personal and social development.
- Develop systems for informing parents about children's progress and for sharing 'targets' for learning before the end of the year.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When they enter the nursery, children's development is lower than usually seen for the age group, although it varies widely between individuals. Around 80% of children are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language and many have little experience outside of the home. Progress is good for both boys and girls and very good in language and personal skills. By the time children transfer to their Reception classes, many have caught up and their development meets that expected for children of this age. The broad foundation of learning prepares children well for the next steps in their education.

Children's behaviour and attitudes are very good because personal, social and emotional development is integrated into all sessions. Children develop good skills of independence and are confident to try out new things. Progress in communication, language and literacy is very good with especially good skills in early writing. By the end of the year, the majority of those learning English as an additional language are able to take good advantage of their lessons. Those whose mother tongue is English also benefit from the school's emphasis on oral work, so they make good progress in speaking and listening skills. The school has recognised the need to develop children's mathematical understanding further and this has been steadily improving over recent years. Progress is good but not as rapid as in communication, language and literacy and personal development. Children are secure when working with numbers, but less confident in understanding shapes, patterns and measures.

Physical and creative development progresses at a good pace because children have imaginative role play areas and an exciting selection of activities to encourage exercise and dexterity. Children's natural curiosity is harnessed through a varied range of opportunities to ask questions and investigate what interests them. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported by staff and outside experts; they make very good progress. The more able pupils have a good level of challenge and many are one year ahead of what is expected by the time they leave the nursery.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Children thoroughly enjoy coming to nursery and develop very positive attitudes to learning. They follow the routines well, consider their choice of activity carefully and sustain good concentration. Children are securely cocooned within this very safe environment. They show good enjoyment in their work and are thrilled when they 'discover' new things. Attendance is satisfactory. The majority of children attend regularly and parents are cooperating well by ensuring that visits to homelands are less frequent and shorter. Behaviour is very good and children show good care and consideration for each other.

Spiritual, moral and social development is good and cultural development is very good. Children know right from wrong and the school is a friendly community where the richness of cultural and religious diversity is celebrated very well. Visits from people such as community police officers and nurses help children to develop a sense of their wider community.

Children know very well what constitutes healthy eating and enjoy varied opportunities for physical exercise. They plant secure seeds for their future economic well-being because they

make good progress in the core areas of learning and develop key personal skills, such as collaboration.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because staff have good expertise; they know how young children learn best and couch challenging tasks into exciting 'play' activities. Adults constantly engage with children, questioning, encouraging discussion and generally extending their communication skills. Interventions from the bilingual assistants accelerate progress and extend children's confidence. Their work as translators also helps parents to be more involved in their children's education. Children are well supported in developing computer skills but, because the computers are sited in different places, adults are prevented from leading the effective and focused group sessions that are seen, for example, on the 'writing table'. The outdoor area is used creatively to promote physical development, opportunities for large scale modelling and to explore the environment and different materials.

Children's progress is continually assessed and the information is used to plan tasks and challenges for each individual. This means that staff know their group of children very well. They are able to tailor work accurately to their needs and to ensure that they are gently steered into trying new activities within the free choice sessions. The provision for children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good. Specialised equipment or expert help is secured where needed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Good planning links activities around a common theme so that learning is constantly reinforced. The learning environment changes daily, with different resources used in rotation. This helps to maintain pupils' interest and fires their imagination.

Activities are well organised into different areas with children encouraged to choose a balance of tasks, for example, those of a 'creative', 'quiet' or 'active' nature. This ensures that they have a wealth of experiences to develop all their skills and talents and expand their horizons. However, the electronic whiteboard is not used as well as it could be for independent work. Social and health education is covered well and adapted to the needs of young children.

Parents receive newsletters informing them of the topics covered. They are encouraged to enrich their children's learning by borrowing from the school's toy and book libraries. Some said that they especially valued the dual language books available.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care and protection for children are seen as paramount and are excellent. The site is secure and safety measures are constantly monitored. Parents commend the standard of care, especially the good introduction and 'settling in' arrangements at the start of Nursery. Child protection procedures are in place and careful checks made on all adults who work in the nursery. The allocation of key adults to work with small groups leads to good relationships and ensures that each child's progress is closely monitored. One adult greets children and their parents at the

start of each session and the hand over at the end of sessions is very secure indeed. On both occasions, parents take good advantage of the informal opportunities to discuss issues or ask questions.

Children are very well supported in their learning because staff plan the next steps for each individual to build carefully on what has already been learnt. New goals are explained to children and sometimes shared with parents informally. Each child's progress is reported at an end-of-year interview with parents, but there is no formal system for reporting back mid year or for informing parents about their children's learning targets so they can help at home.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very effective leadership and is held in high esteem by staff, governors and parents. She is instrumental in maintaining the good caring ethos shared by all adults. Strong teamwork and a shared vision underpin the school's success.

The school reviews its performance regularly and uses the good amount of information on pupils' progress in order to do so. Managers and staff know where the strengths lie and where there is a need for improvement. The system works well; for example, girls' ICT skills and boys' creative work were both improved as a result of detailed assessments and focused action taken over the last year.

The strong sense of pride in school is reflected in the high quality of the learning environment, very efficient administration and good maintenance. The governors support the headteacher well and are actively involved in aspects of school life. All statutory requirements are met.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

4 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Brunel Nursery School, Blackburn, BB1 1HN

I enjoyed coming to your Nursery. Thank you for showing me all the exciting activities you do. I really like the way you all stay so busy, are very happy and get on with each other so well. Your teachers plan different things to do from day to day and that keeps you interested. Some of you told me how much you like the 'silver bikes' and I saw you having lots of fun marching up to the top of the hill like the 'Grand Old Duke of York'.

I saw you doing some interesting work using your electronic whiteboard. You loved it so much that many of you did not want to leave when your parents arrived to take you home. I think your early reading and writing skills are coming along very well and you work really hard. Most of you are also very good with numbers but not as confident with shapes, patterns and measures. Your teachers are already thinking of some exciting activities and games to boost your understanding of mathematics even further. Your parents told me lots about the Nursery and they like the way that you are learning important things that will help you when you start school. They know that your teachers give you targets to achieve, such as matching patterns. They would like to know more about how well you are learning and about these targets so they can help at home; your teachers and I agree that it is a good idea. Perhaps you can help by telling them a bit more about what you do in Nursery.

Thank you for those lovely smiles you gave me and for letting me join in with your games and activities. Keep up the hard work and good luck for the future. I hope that you all enjoy 'big school' as much as the Nursery.

Best wishes

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector