

Phoenix Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104281
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	308561
Inspection date	31 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2-4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	40
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Narinda Reehal
Headteacher	Brigitte Baxter
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2004
School address	Phoenix Street Blakenhall Wolverhampton WV2 3JS
Telephone number	01902 558126
Fax number	01902 558126

Age group	2-4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The nursery is situated in Blakenhall in Wolverhampton and serves an area of high unemployment. Children's attainment on entry is well below that expected nationally. One third of the children are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language and nearly three quarters of the nursery's population are from minority ethnic groups. The nursery received a Basic Skills Award in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good nursery school with several outstanding features. Its work is very much appreciated by the parents: 'I walk for nearly twenty minutes to bring my child here, you are made to feel so welcome and children are exceptionally happy,' said one parent speaking for many. When asked who their best friends are, the children reply, 'Our teachers'. Relationships throughout the nursery are excellent. Staff care for, guide and support the children exceptionally well and children grow in confidence because they know that they are cherished.

Standards are just below national expectations in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development, and match those expected in personal, social and emotional development. From a very low level of entry, children achieve well in all areas of learning with the exception of personal, social and emotional development, where their achievement is outstanding. All groups of children, including those with English as an additional language, make good progress. At times, the very few children capable of higher attainment are not provided with enough challenging opportunities to further improve their letter- and number-formation skills. Similarly, on occasions, too few challenging opportunities are provided for these children to develop their knowledge of sounds and letters.

Outstanding provision for spiritual, moral and social development, coupled with good teaching, ensures that children have outstanding attitudes and behaviour. They are so keen to learn that they arrive at nursery very early, knocking at the door to be let in. So why does this nursery have such a good reputation in the community? Parents rightly put this down to the staff, expertly led by a highly dedicated headteacher.

Teaching and learning are good. All teachers are keen to improve on their previous best performance; they evaluate their work regularly and think about ways of improving learning for children. However, at times, the information from the very detailed observations carried out of children is not used fully to plan the next steps of learning for those few more-capable children. The curriculum is good, with an outstanding feature in outdoor provision. Children know how to make healthy choices and they have exceptionally good awareness of keeping safe. They make an outstanding contribution to the community by collecting monies for a range of charities to help those less fortunate than themselves. They are prepared well for their next steps of education because they become confident and articulate.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher passionately believes in giving her children the best start in life through forging outstanding links with agencies that can help children's well-being. The nursery's self-evaluation is accurate but two minor things need improvement. The school development plan does not make reference in its success criteria to standards children attain. This in turn prevents the governing body from fully evaluating the effectiveness of their spending decisions. In spite of this, the governing body are very knowledgeable about the strengths and areas for development of the nursery's provision. Following the good improvement made since the previous inspection, the nursery has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

As a nursery school, the Foundation Stage is covered in the 'Overall effectiveness' section of this report.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that those few children who are capable of higher attainment have more opportunities to develop their knowledge of sounds and correct letter and number formation.
- Ensure that the success criteria in the school development plan reflect the impact of the nursery's provision on the academic standards that children attain.
- Ensure that the governing body evaluate the impact of their spending decisions on the academic standards that children attain.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are below those expected of children of a similar age but achievement is good. Children make outstanding progress in personal, social and emotional development, where they gain in independence very quickly because of the very secure routines established by staff. In this area of learning, children attain the expected levels for their age. Children are now very keen to talk, showing a good improvement since the previous inspection. However, on occasions, higher attainers make slower progress in improving their skills in matching sounds and letters, and in developing their letter and number formation, than they do in other areas of learning. When children of similar abilities work together in groups, including higher attainers, their rates of progress increase. Children acquiring English as an additional language make good progress as a result of good staff expertise and careful planning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and well-being is outstanding owing to excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the very high emphasis placed on ensuring children's well-being and safety. Children have outstanding attitudes to learning and behave impeccably. They work extremely well with each other. One child playing in the shop on the cash till questioned her friend's shopping list: 'Why do you want chicken nuggets? They are not healthy. You have some carrots instead.' Children love learning in the Forest School. They squeal with delight at the mention of Kingswood and the outdoor play area. Children's understanding of safety is outstanding; they know not to talk to strangers and to cross roads carefully. Children know their home environment exceptionally well. As a result of well-structured learning activities, they develop good social skills and these contribute well to their future economic well-being. Attendance is good and parents are encouraged to bring their children to nursery at all times.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff are highly skilled in promoting children's personal, social and emotional development. As a result, the nursery is calm, orderly and yet lively and exciting as children chat with their teachers about their learning. Expectations are high. Children become confident learners and make good progress in such a secure and supportive environment. Their learning is strongest when they work in small groups based upon their identified needs. Staff undertake very detailed and thorough assessments of their children and know them exceptionally well. However, on occasions, the information collected on children is not used fully to plan activities that push the few more-capable children in their learning, especially in developing key literacy and numeracy skills. Activities meet the needs of children learning English as an additional language well and, as a result, they make good progress. Parents are very pleased with the information they receive on their children. 'They don't miss anything, they know our children better than we do,' said an enthusiastic parent. 'The teaching in this nursery is really good because the children learn so much through play.' A strong feature of the teaching is the way staff plan learning, building upon children's interest levels. As a result, children are highly motivated. 'This nursery works around the child, rather than the child working around the teacher,' comments a very satisfied parent: 'Our children learn well because their interest levels are taken into account.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides good opportunities for children to work together, be part of a team and take turns. As a result, children are well prepared for their primary school. Planning takes good account of children's interests and mostly matches their needs well. As a result, they are highly motivated and enjoy their learning. It consistently meets the needs of children at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. On occasions, planning does not include sufficient opportunities to challenge higher attainers. The curriculum is highly enriched by visits to the Forest School and this contributes significantly to children's emerging skills of citizenship, with children learning about caring for wildlife and the environment. Children learn quickly because of the good range of stimulating resources used.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support, including the partnership with parents and outside agencies, are outstanding. As a result of this, children make exceptionally good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Parents appreciate the staff's efforts in getting to know their children as individuals. All staff show great sensitivity to children's feelings and ensure that they feel safe in the nursery. Procedures for safeguarding and protecting children are very thorough and recently good monitoring systems have been put in place to monitor children's progress. The use of this information is not yet fully reflected in teachers' formal planning but teachers know their children very well and structure their learning so that they know what they need to do to improve. Parents have benefitted from expert advice organised by the nursery in dealing with behaviour and looking after their children. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken and all correct procedures are followed to eliminate any possible racist incidents.

The nursery is a true multi-cultural community where everyone is valued and supported so that they achieve well academically. All children are exceptionally well cared for by a highly dedicated staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very clear strategic direction for the nursery and is well supported by the deputy headteacher and all the staff. Responsibilities are clearly allocated and all staff work effectively as a harmonious team. There is good leadership and management at all levels, including a very strong sense of direction and striving for further improvement. Monitoring procedures are thorough and areas requiring improvement are accurately identified. As a result, the school has sustained its many strengths from the previous inspection and improved in significant areas, notably in children's achievement and in developing the outside learning environment. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well and, as one governor said, 'We are here to build strong communities and valuing one another starts in the nursery.' This vision has clearly been achieved because equality of opportunity has been promoted so effectively. The governing body are very well informed, although the absence of clear success criteria in school planning limits their ability to judge fully the impact of spending decisions. Staff morale is high, staff continuously reflect on what they do and, under the expert leadership of the headteacher, their performance is regularly monitored, with targets given for improvement. Opportunities for professional development are plentiful and well used. Staff enthusiastically try new things to aid children's learning.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	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.

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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

1 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Phoenix Nursery School, Wolverhampton, West Midlands, WV2 3JS

Thank you for being so helpful to me when I came to inspect your nursery. You are very lucky to go to such a good nursery. My goodness, don't you all have a wonderful time there! I agree with your parents that the nursery helps you learn quickly and that you are well prepared for big school. You have excellent attitudes to learning and your behaviour is outstanding. You are so polite to one another and you share your toys. I think your profile books are very detailed and I love your photographs.

I was particularly impressed with the work you did in Kingswood, with all that space and all those trees for you to run around in. Your outdoor classroom is outstanding. I'm glad the shopkeeper advises her customers on healthy food!

Your teachers teach you well and your headteacher is doing a grand job at ensuring that you are well prepared for big school. I have asked your teachers to make a few improvements to help your learning. Those of you who find learning easy can help by carefully forming your letters and numbers correctly and by learning your sounds. I have also asked your headteacher and governing body to look more closely at how the many toys and games bought for you help improve your learning. You could help by telling your teachers about the activities you most enjoy and why you like doing them.

All the best to you all.

Yours sincerely

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley Lead inspector



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Lead inspector