

St Germain Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105145
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	308777
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Emma Scowcroft
Headteacher	Mrs A Gaffney
Date of previous school inspection	11 April 2005
School address	St Germain Street Farnworth Bolton Lancashire BL4 7BQ
Telephone number	01204 572694
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school provides part-time Nursery education for children, most of whom attend either the morning or the afternoon session. Under special circumstances, children may attend full time and currently a small number of children do so. The school serves an area with some significant social and economic disadvantage. Most children are from White British backgrounds, with a very small proportion from other heritages. A small number of children have home languages other than English, although, currently, none are at an early stage of learning to speak English.

The school has recently federated with a nearby primary school and a special primary school and there is now a single governing body responsible for all three schools. The schools will relocate to a new shared site in September 2008, when the nursery school will become part of a Foundation Stage unit. The new site will also provide accommodation for a Children's Centre, library and a youth facility. In the current year, the schools have been managed semi-independently of each other, under the federation umbrella. Leadership appointments are currently taking place in preparation for the final stage in establishing full federation arrangements in the coming school year.

The school holds the Healthy Schools Award and the Quality Mark for a Nurturing Environment.

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 school, with many outstanding features, that provides a good standard of education and gives good value for money. Parents' overwhelmingly positive response illustrates the high regard in which the school is held in its community. The period since the last inspection has been a difficult one for the school, due to uncertainties about its future. The headteacher and her staff have kept it on an even keel throughout and parents comment that the quality of provision for their children has remained unaffected by the external turbulence. Numbers on roll have remained constant and the school continues to operate a waiting list.

Children make good progress towards the expected goals in all areas of learning during their time in the Nursery, and this prepares them well for future stages in their education. From starting points that are generally below expected levels when they enter, they catch up with national expectations by the time they leave. This is an improving picture over time, with an increased proportion in the current year working above national expectations in some areas of learning. Children with additional learning needs achieve well and those with home languages other than English also make good progress. In both cases, this reflects the good support provided for them. The quality of teaching is good and adults' good knowledge of children's learning needs results in the provision of good quality learning activities both in and out of doors. Assessment processes are used effectively to plan the next steps in children's learning. However, the information from assessment is not analysed well enough to provide clear information on the progress of the different groups of children in the school. This means that, for example, governors do not have a sufficiently detailed picture of both the areas of strength and those areas where further action may be needed.

Excellent provision for children's welfare results in their outstanding personal development. The school has developed very well the role of the key worker who has special responsibility to support children's skills development across the curriculum and to help them feel secure and safe, and ready to learn. Children are given very good support and encouragement to develop self-help skills and to care for the needs of others. Their behaviour is outstanding and they cheerfully carry out responsibilities and help to organise activities during the sessions.

The school is well led and managed, and since the last inspection staff have developed an improved ability to assist the headteacher in assuring the quality of provision. The staff team works together well with a shared sense of purpose. Strategic planning for improvement is mostly effective and evidence of successful outcomes can be seen in children's good progress. The school has good capacity to improve further. The use of sharply defined whole-school targets has begun to be developed in some areas, with particular success in children's personal, social and emotional development. Whole-school targets for development in literacy and numeracy are not sufficiently precise and this makes it difficult for the school's leaders to measure accurately how successful their actions have been in these areas. The contribution of the governing body to school leadership and management is at a developing stage as this is a time of transition for the federation, although appropriate interim arrangements are in place to ensure satisfactory governance. The school's good partnerships with parents and carers help to support the children's progress. Partnerships with other providers and with external support agencies are also good and contribute well to ensuring the children's welfare. While no major refurbishment of the building has been possible since the time of the last inspection, judicious management of resources has enabled an attractive learning environment to be created within the limitations of the out-dated accommodation. The areas used for teaching are safe and

secure. The outdoor area is used very well to provide exciting and stimulating opportunities for children to learn through play.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

As a Nursery school, the Foundation Stage is completely covered by the Overall Effectiveness section.

What the school should do to improve further

- Analyse the information gained from assessing individuals' skills to identify separately the progress made by different groups of children.
- Develop precise whole-school targets for literacy and numeracy against which to measure improvement in children's performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children's skills, knowledge and understanding when they begin Nursery are below the expected levels for their age. Good provision enables them to progress well in relation to their starting points, so that by the time they leave Nursery most have caught up with national expectations. In the current year, an increased proportion of children are working at levels that exceed national expectations in some of the areas of learning, for example, in their personal, social and emotional development and in aspects of literacy. Children develop very positive attitudes to learning. They are able to talk about their ideas and what they are learning. They develop a good ability to make independent choices about their learning activities. They make very good progress in building positive relationships with each other and with the adults in the setting. They also progress very well in gaining skills for self-help and independence. Children with additional learning needs benefit from good inclusive and supportive arrangements and achieve well. Children who do not have English as their home language benefit from additional support and from the school's good strategies to promote all children's speaking and listening skills; this helps them to become increasingly confident communicators.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The children's personal development is outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent and they play and learn together happily. They feel safe and secure in the setting and enjoy warm relationships with the adults in school. They are enthusiastic learners who thoroughly enjoy the range of stimulating activities provided for them. They enjoy working together as 'talking partners' and this adds to their confidence as learners. They have a very good, age-appropriate, understanding of healthy living issues: they are encouraged to make sensible choices about what they eat and drink; they know that being active and taking exercise is important for good health; they conform very well to the school's supportive routines for self-care and hygiene. Children take responsibility for organising and tidying resources at the start and end of sessions; they take these tasks very seriously and complete them fully. The children are very good at taking turns and sharing. They understand the importance of good manners and considering the feelings of others. All of this contributes to the very good organisation of activities, with children participating very actively in ensuring everything goes smoothly! The nursery regularly takes part in fund-raising activities for charities and the children's involvement in this is encouraged

well. Their good progress in establishing early literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills prepares children well for the next stages in their education. Attendance levels are satisfactory. The school's effective partnership with parents has resulted in a significant improvement in attendance figures this year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching, underpinned by effective teamwork between all staff, leads to children making good progress and establishing positive attitudes to learning. The deployment of staff is managed effectively. The provision of the key worker role is a critical factor, enabling each child to benefit from small group teaching every day and from a close, nurturing relationship with an identified adult. Adult input is of good quality, with some outstanding practice, and is based on a thorough knowledge of children's learning needs. High quality planning and organisation ensure that the children enjoy and are suitably challenged by the activities provided. Assessment is based on detailed observation by the key worker, and is suitably systematic and rigorous. Records of achievement are used well to help give children and their parents an overview of their learning and progress. Provision for children with additional learning needs is of high quality, with effective procedures to identify and address those needs at an early stage, and a strong focus on preventative action. Good relationships with parents and carers are established at the outset and maintained well. This supports parents in helping their children to succeed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The carefully planned curriculum is responsive to the children's needs, with a good balance of adult-led activities and those instigated by the children themselves. It provides good opportunities for them to succeed and grow in confidence as learners. The excellent curriculum to support children's personal, social and emotional development enables them to make very good progress in their self-help skills and their relationships. Children are encouraged to explore, try out new experiences and ideas and to make decisions. The learning environment is well organised and well resourced. The outdoor area is particularly attractive and provides a wide range of opportunities to learn through play, in a tranquil setting. The introduction of new strategies to teach letters and sounds is having a positive impact on children's progress in literacy and there are plentiful opportunities for them to practise their new skills in play activities indoors and out. Improved resources and staff training in ICT have had a positive impact, evidenced in the children's growing confidence in using computers and other electronic equipment, including digital cameras. Small group teaching by the key workers ensures that children with additional learning needs have full access to learning and that more able children are challenged and extended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding care, guidance and support contribute very well to the children's personal development. The setting is well equipped, safe and secure and the supportive environment enables children to thrive. Parents value this highly, with many commenting on improvements

observed in their children's confidence during their time at nursery. There is an extremely high level of commitment across the setting to promoting the children's well-being, and the strategies for this are implemented effectively and consistently. This is seen in the strong emphasis on developing self-care, good manners and consideration for others through very clear and simple routines. Adults explain very carefully to the children about why and how we need to take care of ourselves and each other and they provide excellent support and encouragement for the development of these skills. Children respond very well to this by being friendly and caring towards each other and by carrying out small tasks and responsibilities in a sensible and conscientious manner. Arrangements for child protection, safeguarding, and health and safety are all in place and meet statutory requirements. Children at risk are identified early and effective arrangements put in place to support and include them and to keep them engaged. The school works extremely well with parents and carers, and with other agencies and providers to ensure the children are well cared for.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The effective headteacher has created a strong team ethos, with a clear focus on achieving the best possible outcomes for the children in their learning and in their personal development and welfare. Under her leadership, the quality of provision has been continuously improved, despite changes in governance and uncertainties about the school's future. Effective deployment and good management of the performance of staff have enabled them to gain confidence and to develop further their expertise through appropriate professional development. This has raised the quality of teaching and learning and has had a positive impact on children's achievement. The staff team now also plays an increasingly proactive role in assuring the quality of provision across the setting. Provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well led and managed. Self-evaluation is accurate, because the headteacher and her staff know the school very well. They have an accurate picture of each child's progress, gained through thorough assessment processes, and they use this information to help them plan the provision and the next steps in children's learning. Formal analysis of the progress of different groups of children has not yet been developed. The school has used numerical targets successfully to help bring about improvements in children's progress in their personal, social and emotional development. This approach has not yet been fully developed for literacy and numeracy and this reduces leaders' ability to evaluate the success of measures designed to bring about improvement in these areas. The federation governing body is able to hold the school to account satisfactorily and to act as its critical friend. In this time of transition, the governing body's links with the school's daily life are managed through the link governor, who plays an active role in maintaining communication channels.

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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?	2
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	2
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	2
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	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	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

Inspection of St Germain Nursery School, Bolton, BL4 7BQ

Thank you all so very much for the beautiful welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. I came to see how well the school is doing and especially how you are all getting on.

This is what I found out.

- Yours is a really good school and you are very lucky to be there.
- You are all making such lovely progress. I was especially pleased to see how much you enjoy your activities, such as learning your letters and sounds. Well done, everybody!
- You are doing so well because of your teachers. Well done teachers!
- The headteacher and the staff are really kind to you.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are very caring towards each other.

I have asked the headteacher and the staff to find out a bit more about how every single one of you is doing. You can help by continuing to be such happy learners!

With my very best wishes to you all.