

Alexandra Nursery School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	105142
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	324167
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2008
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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	0–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs L Stokes
Headteacher	Mrs B Kenny
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2005
School address	Martha Street Daubhill Bolton Lancashire BL3 4AH
Telephone number	01204 332678
Fax number	01204 332679

Age group	0–5
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Amended Report Addendum

It includes a large nursery school and since 2004 has provided and managed childcare for children under three within a nearby children's centre.

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Alexandra is an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provider. It includes a large nursery school and since 2004 has provided and managed childcare for children under three within a nearby children's centre. The under three's childcare provides for children from birth to three years of age. The setting serves a culturally and socially mixed area. Many children starting in the nursery are new to learning English and, as a consequence, their skills are below expected levels. Around 6% of children in the nursery have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mainly relating to speech, language and communication (resourced provision) and physical difficulties. The school provides before and after school care, and places for all day extended day care. The nursery has the Bolton Quality Inclusion Kitemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Alexandra Nursery and under three's childcare provides children with a good start to their education and gives good value for money. The inspectors' judgement confirms the school's accurate self-evaluation. Parents are very satisfied with the quality of what is going on and a typical view is, 'My daughter went to the under three's centre where she settled very quickly and enjoyed her time there. She moved to the nursery without a problem and is enjoying herself.' The school has continued to improve provision particularly its support for children in the early stages of learning English, and children's skills are rising. The capacity to improve further is good.

Children's personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. This is because both the curriculum and welfare provision promote personal development in an exemplary manner. It is absolutely obvious that children in the under three's childcare and the nursery thoroughly enjoy being there and they are developing greater confidence and independence. Children know and understand that eating healthily is very important. Where activities have added risk, they collaborate well and show sensitivity to each other and behave outstandingly. Consequently, they have developed an exemplary approach to playing safely. Children and their parents say they like their walks in the community because they are shown how to cross roads with an adult and to be extra careful.

Many children begin nursery with skills that are below expected levels, particularly in their communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development. This is due to many of the children being at the earliest stages of speaking English as an additional language. They make good progress, achieve well and leave the nursery with broadly typical skills. This means that they are well prepared for their future education. There is a good balance between the adult-led activities and the ones that children choose for themselves, both inside and outside the building. The grouping of children according to their individual needs means that activities are mostly matched well to the child's needs, most particularly in the good work on letter sounds and building words and counting. The very good partnership with a range of outside agencies directly supports children with specific needs.

The effective provision for learning includes interesting activities and good, and developing links are made between the various aspects of the areas of learning. Practical and play activities allow children to develop their unique interests and abilities well. The school has recently started to match its various programmes for teaching and learning to the new EYFS guidelines, but there is still some way to go in showing how well children's individual learning needs are being met.

Leadership and management are good. The senior staff have worked hard and successfully to manage the challenging incorporation of the under 3's childcare. A significant factor here has been the strong vision of the headteacher and the good support of senior colleagues, particularly in developing the good provision for learning and welfare. However, governance is only just satisfactory. Despite some useful work by the knowledgeable chair of governors and staff governors, the governing body is too reliant on the headteacher for checking on the school's work and this means that a more independent view of its performance is often lacking.

What the school should do to improve further

- In planning, include references to the new EYFS framework so that children's unique learning requirements are met.
- Improve the governing body's participation in checking on the effectiveness of the school's work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In the under three's childcare children make sound progress in their learning given their capabilities and starting points. Most children are willing to participate in learning activities. The younger children really enjoy stories and rhymes and learn to join in, their faces conveying their enthusiasm and enjoyment, although not all feel confident enough to join in the singing. Adults take every opportunity to count with the children, for example, as they climbed up and down the steps. Children are also encouraged to be curious as they press wet sand out of containers and play happily together with a wide range of equipment. The children are encouraged by the adults to develop their self-confidence and enjoy new experiences.

Achievement in the nursery is good. Children start their schooling with skills that are below expected levels. This is especially so in their communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development. Progress is good and when they leave the nursery their skills are broadly typical for children of their age. Records show that the children's skills are better than in previous years, particularly in the use of vocabulary and understanding of number. Adult-led activities focus on improving communication and numeracy skills. As a result, children, including the large proportion who speak English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, progress well. Older children gain skills that are appropriate for their age in their knowledge and understanding of the world, such as using the computer mouse skilfully and learning how plants grow as they work in the garden. Children's creative development is supported by their enjoyment of the use of colour. A more mature child produced a picture that was detailed and carefully crafted. Less able children make marks that lack precision, although they are able to describe what their picture is about. Physical development ranges from improving handling skills to climbing, pedalling and leaping across a gap. The majority of children have the confidence to join others in physical activities, often in the outdoor areas. They are making rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Clearly, children settle quickly, learn to share and collaborate and concentrate for long periods of time.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children under three thoroughly enjoy attending the children's centre, settle quickly to the routines and expectations and make good progress in their personal development. Behaviour is excellent. Children are confident and smile readily. They make choices sensibly, either in working independently or joining in with large or small groups of other children.

The children's outstanding personal development in the nursery is obvious as they arrive at the start of the day. They show good self-esteem, confidence and independence and immerse themselves in the activities on offer. Staff engage the children in talking about themselves and what they are doing. One child discussed the precise and accurate painting she was busily doing and enjoyed it when an adult praised her 'new' hairstyle. Children's excellent behaviour is the

result of them having a clear view of right and wrong and staff provide good role models. This is also at the root of the children's exemplary contribution to the nursery community. Children are keen to learn and are inquisitive, for example, when they are outside. A good discussion took place between an adult and some children about the worms in the sandpit. Attendance is good for the majority of children, but a minority of families do not see the importance of sending their children to school regularly.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 2

Overall, the provision for the under three's is satisfactory. The under three's childcare promotes their personal, social and emotional development well, including the opportunities for these very young children to learn about healthy foods and show confidence when tasting them. The way in which the richness of the learning environment is mixed with the sensory area is stimulating and a particular strength. However, the area is less stimulating for literacy and numeracy and some of the more permanent resources, such as those in the role-play areas, are getting old and worn.

In the nursery, children's good progress is promoted by effective teaching, particularly in developing their language and communication skills and mathematical development. Thorough and accurate observations of children's language needs lead to effective and direct teaching in groups. A key factor in this is the excellent relationships between children and staff that lead to confident children who make good gains in their learning. The curriculum promotes academic development well. The curriculum is well enriched by visitors and visits. Programmes of learning are well matched and helpfully modified to children's needs, particularly those that have some difficulties in learning.

Across the setting, current planning does not show clearly enough how the principles of the new EYFS framework are put into practice.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 2

Provision for children's welfare in the under three's setting and in the nursery is good. Particular strengths include: caring staff who are sensitive to young children's needs; a strong focus on helping children to settle happily, to attend regularly and to make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. There are robust policies relating to all welfare matters, such as how to administer medicines and to give first aid. Checks on behaviour and attendance are rigorous. Policies to safeguard children meet current government requirements. Links with outside agencies are very good and these provide invaluable support for children, their parents and staff. Nevertheless, there is a lack of clarity in the procedures for checking on welfare policies, particularly by the governing body. In the main, the majority of the governing body do not keep up to date with policy-making and rely too heavily on the senior staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

In the under three's centre, leadership and management are satisfactory. The centre runs smoothly and there is effective organisation of the complex pattern of attendance. Good relationships and a strong sense of teamwork contribute significantly to providing for a community need and giving children a positive start to their learning. Nevertheless, improvements are needed, in that the checks on the effectiveness of the curriculum and of assessment lack rigour. This means that leaders and managers do not have an accurate enough picture of the way in which the EYFS framework is put into practice.

In the nursery, there is a strong sense of teamwork. The senior staff have a clear view of strengths and areas for improvement and self-evaluation is mostly accurate. Senior staff are working very effectively on improving the curriculum and ensuring that all children have equal opportunities and participate fully. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The extended day care is managed well. The school's contribution to promoting community cohesion is very good. Both the nursery and the Children's Centre provide a base for the community to seek and find assistance and guidance, in a range of matters, often beyond education. One parent praised the school for the way it helped children from a range of ethnic backgrounds to 'get together.' Furthermore, many parents appreciated the way the school helped the children gain an early understanding of community facilities, such as the local library and museum. Although governance is satisfactory overall, too much responsibility for checks on the effectiveness of provision is placed on the senior staff. As a result, there is little evidence of helpful challenge by the governing body.

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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 is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do children in the EYFS 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/or disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children?	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
The extent to which 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 effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?	2

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Alexandra Nursery School, Bolton, BL3 4AH

We had a lovely time in your Nursery and under three's childcare. It was clear that you were having a great time. We enjoyed talking to you and it was good to see you working hard and learning about letters and counting well. It was obvious from what your mums, dads and carers told us that they liked the school very much.

There are lots of interesting things going on in your good school, but I can only mention a few of them in this short letter.

Here are some of the things that were really good.

- Your excellent behaviour and the help you give each other when you are working.
- The visits and visitors who help you learn and make your day more interesting.
- All the things you are learning about making good choices of food and being safe.
- The good help you receive from all the adults in the school.
- All the interesting activities that are prepared for you each day and the way you are improving your English.
- The way the adults keep you really safe and talk with your mums and dads if there are worries of any kind.
- Your parents and carers are happy with the school.

There are things that would make Alexandra even better.

- Very recently, a new way of working was introduced for children under the age of four and I have asked the headteacher and teachers to use it when they plan activities for you.
- Finally, I have asked the governors of the school to work even harder to ensure your safety and learning.

I know that you like school and I want you to promise that you will continue to enjoy it.

Best wishes and good luck for the future.