

Alwyn Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109818
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	325036
Inspection date	7 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Sudworth

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	236
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	41
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lynn May
Headteacher	Miss Nicky Cale
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Mulberry Walk Maidenhead SL6 6EU
Telephone number	01628 622477
Fax number	01628 789411

Age group	4–7
Inspection date	7 October 2008
Inspection number	325036

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following areas.

- The differences in attainment between boys and girls and how the school has addressed this.
- How the school manages the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the effectiveness of the education and welfare provided for children before they start Year 1.
- The provision and progress of pupils learning English as an additional language.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the analysis of test results and assessments of pupils' performance, as well as parents' responses to questionnaires and discussions with pupils, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Children join the oversubscribed Nursery after their fourth birthday and attend either morning or afternoon. These children join others from a very large range of different pre-school settings to begin in one of the three Reception classes the term after their fifth birthday. The percentages of pupils entitled to free school meals and those who have difficulties in learning basic skills is below the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is about the same as in most schools. The percentage of pupils whose first language is other than English is slightly lower than in most schools. A small proportion of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

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. The children are very clearly the staff's highest priority. This is seen in the excellent arrangements for their care and welfare, pupils' outstanding personal development and the very good links with parents and carers, reflecting the school's motto 'Together we build the future'. Staff know the children very well and build up their self-esteem and confidence effectively. Parents are justifiably pleased with the good progress that their children make. As one parent stated, 'My child comes home every day with a smile on her face looking forward to the next day.' The school deservedly has a good reputation in the area.

Attendance is good. Pupils behave well. They have an excellent understanding of safe and healthy living. They know, for example, that eating fruit and vegetables and exercise are important. Pupils select sensible choices of food at lunchtimes. They know that they must avoid talking to strangers and not cross roads without an adult. Pupils are keen to develop their school further. They suggested and helped to raise money to build shelters in the playground and have suggested improvements to the wild life area on which the school is now taking action. They support a range of charities, for example, by filling shoe boxes with presents for deprived children abroad and singing locally to the elderly at Christmas. They have a very good understanding of the needs of others.

Standards are rising steadily and are currently above average in reading, mathematics and science. Writing standards are average, but they could be higher. Over time, boys, and particularly those of higher ability, have made slower progress in writing and fewer pupils have achieved the higher level compared with reading and mathematics. Results in writing improved in 2008. In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the children's skills in communication, language and literacy (CLL), particularly their knowledge of sounds and letters is a weaker element of their work. The school is aware of these issues. It is striving to overcome them by, for example, selecting writing topics and literature in Years 1 and 2 that appeal more to boys' interests.

Overall, pupils make good progress in their work. However, girls generally attain more highly than boys in all areas of learning, particularly in writing. Pupils who experience initial difficulty in learning basic skills progress well because of the regular one-to-one support that they receive, for example, to help them sound out and read letter sounds and words. The few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English make satisfactory progress despite having little knowledge of spoken English when they join the school. There are strong links with a local special school that keeps the staff up to date and well trained in supporting pupils who have learning difficulties.

Reading, mathematics and science are particular curriculum strengths because staff give good attention to them. Grouping pupils by ability in mathematics, and when they learn letter sounds and blends in English in Years 1 and 2, supports well their individual progress in these areas of learning. It also helps to match work accurately to the pupils' needs and abilities. The curriculum continues to develop and the staff are now engaged in efforts to link technology, literacy and numeracy across different subjects so that it helps pupils to apply their skills across a range of subjects and topics. A particular strength is the wide range of extra-curricular activities before and after school, which widen the pupils' interests and add to their thorough enjoyment of school. Pupils are very involved in sport and extra-curricular activities and this is helping them to adopt healthy and active life-styles. Effective links with a specialist sports secondary school help to provide good quality physical education and opportunities to take part in sport.

Pupils have a good understanding of different beliefs and cultures. They acquire good social skills. Well chosen literature such as 'Neligan's Pig' supports their good understanding of right and wrong, consideration for others and self-esteem. They develop good skills for the next stage of their education. The pupils relate very well to other adults, such as the volunteer helpers. The regular support of a few dads helps to motivate boys in their work attitudes. The school rightly values this extra support. A teacher was modelling effectively the teaching of reading as the child's grandfather looked on because he wanted to support the child's reading at home in the best way possible. The partnership of school and home and the community is a very strong feature of the school's work. Curriculum meetings support parents' understanding of teaching approaches and assist them to support their children. The school's open door policy and approachability enable any issues to be resolved quickly and help parents' understanding of their children's ongoing progress.

The headteacher's very good leadership, infectious enthusiasm and knowledge of each individual child have contributed significantly to the school's good progress since the last inspection. Subject leaders now monitor their responsibilities more analytically and senior staff are beginning to take on responsibility for whole school initiatives, such as the development of ecology and environmental awareness. However, the staff's monitoring of teaching does not always identify the most important priorities for improvement. The governing body is very supportive and understands the school's strengths and weaknesses. It is still quite reliant on the school for information but it challenges decisions and questions effectively. Teaching assistants provide good support with some having particular expertise, such as in speech therapy. The tracking of pupils' progress is very good so that the reasons for any pupil not making the expected progress can be investigated and actions put in place to ensure improved performance.

Lessons are well taught, but occasionally they could proceed at a brisker pace and engage pupils more actively, for example, by enabling pupils to contribute more. In a good Year 2 literacy lesson designed to help pupils write a story with the correct sequence of events, the teacher used drama well to get the pupils to act out the various elements of the story. This approach not only added to the interest of the lesson but also helped the pupils to sequence the events correctly when they later came to write about the story. Marking of pupils' work is effective. It is up to date and the written comments on pupils' books help the children to improve their work.

This is a school where the whole staff work very well as a team in the interests of each child. It is a happy school with good communication and a unity of purpose where school and home pull together. The harmonious atmosphere in which the staff work provides it with a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The children's skills and knowledge meet the expectations for their age when they first enter the Nursery, although there is a wide spectrum of ability. Children in the EYFS make good progress overall and most reach the levels expected of five-year-olds by the time they start Year 1 in most areas of learning. However, the standard reached in their CLL is below expectations especially in identifying letters and linking them with the sounds that they make in words. Boys in particular have difficulties in CLL. This has been clearly identified and effective steps are now being taken to improve this aspect of their work. Planning is effective and leads to a good balance of teacher led activities and opportunities for children to choose activities for themselves. Record keeping is diligent and supports the next stages of the children's learning.

The comparatively new leader of the Foundation Stage is providing outstanding leadership. There are excellent care arrangements and she has created a rich learning environment in which all children enjoy their education and achieve well. The children develop very good levels of independence. Teachers make learning fun. In one lesson, Nursery children used food colouring to investigate the effects when added to puddles. This really caught their imagination and supported their speaking skills as they discussed the effects. Staff work very closely with parents and there are excellent arrangements to prepare and settle the children into school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve boys' attainment especially in writing at the higher levels.
- Facilitate and build upon improvements in the children's development of CLL skills in the EYFS.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

20 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Alwyn Infant and Nursery School, Maidenhead, SL6 6EU

It was very nice to meet you. We enjoyed talking to you, seeing your school at work and visiting you in lessons. You attend a good school and you enjoy school very much. Many of you take part in the extra activities before and after lessons. You behave well in class and like your teachers. Your headteacher and the staff make up a very good team. They really take care of you and have an interest in each one of you. Your parents are really pleased that you attend Alwyn Infants and we can understand why.

You make good progress in your work and several of you reach a standard that is higher than usual for your age. However, there are two areas of work where you can aim to do even better. We would like the boys to try even harder because the girls are often doing better, especially in writing. We would also like children in the Reception to do better in learning to read and write.

The staff work hard to make your lessons interesting and you really enjoy these. They are always thinking of new ways to keep you interested. They give you work that helps your good progress. You show a lot of interest in making your school even better. We were interested to know that you make suggestions to improve the school, such as the shelters that have been built and your ideas to make the wild life area more attractive to animals.

We would like to thank you once again for your help when we visited and hope that you will continue to work hard and enjoy school.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sudworth

Lead Inspector