

Ashworth Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119091
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	326943
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Eric Jackson

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 (total)	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Don Rishton
Headteacher	Mrs Joan Whaley (Acting Head)
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2005
School address	Addison Close Blackburn Lancashire BB2 1QU
Telephone number	01254 263312
Fax number	01254 263312

Age group	3–4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Nursery serves an area of significant economic and social disadvantage. It is very popular locally and regularly achieves its intake number of 50 children in each of the morning and afternoon sessions as the year progresses. Currently, 58 children attend either in the morning or the afternoon. The large majority of the children are of British Asian heritage, many of whom speak limited English at entry having English as an Additional language. A small number of children are identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school is subject to reorganisation proposals to take effect from April 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ashworth Nursery School provides a good education for its children, maintaining the good provision found at its last inspection in 2005. The staff, ably led by the acting headteacher, have determinedly kept their focus on ensuring that the children make good progress. This is despite the uncertainty surrounding the planned change of status of the school, although it is intended to maintain its place in the community. Parents give overwhelming support and say that the staff are 'wonderful', 'very caring' and that they 'really help our children to love coming to Nursery'. One parent movingly explained the beneficial impact on her own confidence of the staff's support and of that offered to her child who has additional needs.

The school is safe and secure and children are well cared for. Arrangements to welcome new parents and children are good. It is delightful to see such young children cheerfully saying goodbye to their parents or carers at the start of a session so early in the year. This underlines the professionalism of the staff and their understanding of the need for security and love for children of this age.

Children achieve well. They make really good progress in how to behave, learning the new routines and managing themselves in a range of situations and activities. They mostly play and take part in activities on their own or alongside another child. Occasionally, they play together and share toys and equipment sensibly. However, children are not encouraged enough to choose activities and resources for themselves both indoors and outdoors. They behave extremely well for their age and make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. From starting points well below those typical for this age, almost all of them improve well to reach below expected levels when they enter Reception. This was reflected in a National Achievement Award in 2006.

Provision for children's learning and development is good. The staff are highly qualified and have a wide range of skills and experience. This enables them to focus well on children's developing needs, as one of the staff said 'to follow the child in their learning'. The setting is effectively organised to promote progress across all of the six areas of learning required for their age. There is a strong focus on children's personal development and language skills at the start of the year. The transition from home to school is managed well because there are staff competent in the different home languages of the children. The staff plan together well and assess children's growing skills and achievements effectively through observation and direct assessment activities.

The setting is well led and managed. The acting headteacher has ensured with the willing cooperation of the staff that the quality of provision has been maintained and new ideas have been implemented. Staff morale is high, despite the uncertain future status of the Nursery. Factors beyond the school's control have prevented the planned refurbishment of the outdoor learning area. There have been unavoidable delays in update training for staff in some of the new requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage. These factors have to a large degree restricted the staff's ability to develop fully outdoor learning and the promotion of greater independence and choice in children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for continuous outdoor learning across all areas of experience.

- Develop systems to plan for and assess children's learning that lead to them having more independence in choosing what they do and how they do it.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children's overall attainment on entry is well below what is typical for their age and a significant number have limited communication and language skills, particularly boys. Many children transfer to Reception classes with skills below those expected in most areas of learning, especially in their English language development and their knowledge and understanding of the world. Almost all children make good gains in their learning because they receive good challenge and support. A crucial factor in this good progress is the emphasis placed by staff on helping children to settle, learn how to manage themselves, and to develop their personal, social and emotional skills very well. Older children in their second term here have made good progress in their mathematical understanding, naming regular shapes accurately and detailing some of their properties. Most children make good progress in their physical development through outdoor activity. However, children are not encouraged enough to choose activities and resources for themselves both indoors and outdoors. The great majority of children who are learning English as an additional language achieve well, including the boys. This is because activities are practical and engaging. Support for them to speak clearly and listen carefully is good, particularly from bi-lingual or multi-lingual staff. There are good systems to identify at an early stage children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Detailed plans for their progress ensure that tasks and activities meet their needs effectively.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development and well-being are good with some outstanding features. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The children's behaviour is remarkable at this early stage of the year. During a whole group story and singing session, linked to Ramadan and Eid, all the children concentrated well, showed clear enjoyment and engaged in clapping to and singing innovative songs about the upcoming Eid party. The staff take every opportunity to reflect the wide cultural backgrounds of the children in activities, displays and visits. Strong links with the local community reinforce children's excellent social, moral and cultural development. From the sharing of healthy snacks, managing their own hygiene and enjoying physical exercise, children illustrate the Nursery's involvement in the local authority's healthy living programme. They really enjoy their time here, one boy spending over 20 minutes exploring with deep concentration the properties and possible shapes of a lump of play dough. Through the staff's vigilance and help, children learn safe procedures and follow them. This reinforces how well they care for the equipment and fabric of the setting. They make good progress in the skills and abilities that equip them to take good advantage of learning opportunities when they enter Reception. They choose activities sensibly, although they are not always encouraged enough to initiate aspects of their own learning.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 2

The staff promote children's learning and development well. Relationships between children and staff are positive and help children to develop their social and emotional skills strongly. One parent, reflecting the views of many, said, 'Everyone is so friendly; staff are very helpful and approachable.' The Nursery staff have a good knowledge of the children and the required curriculum, planning tasks that meet most of the needs of all learners. There is a strong and effective concentration early in the year on children's personal and language development. Children have new learning experiences through a structured range of activities. However, on occasions they have insufficient opportunity to develop their own ideas. Support staff are fully involved in all aspects of the provision and make a good contribution to children's development. Provision for children who are learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a particular strength. Adults have good knowledge of the learners' needs, assessment and record keeping is effective and good links with external partners are established. However, there is insufficient encouragement for children to use the outdoors to support their learning across all areas of experience.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 2

Parents feel that the setting is very safe and that their children are very well looked after. Inspection evidence confirms this view. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that children are safe indoors and out and all required safeguarding procedures are in place. The setting is well organised to meet children's learning needs and to allow them to move round and through it safely. Children are taught to manage themselves safely and links with health service workers promote healthy lifestyles. For example, all children are taught how to clean their teeth and are also provided with a toothbrush and toothpaste.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Required improvements in planning since the last inspection have been made and strengths have been maintained. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, leading to an effective management and improvement plan. The acting headteacher has helped the staff stay focused and motivated. They have responded by ensuring that the Nursery's high reputation locally for children's care, enjoyment and progress is assured. There are aspects of preparation for the new Early Years Foundation Stage that are not yet fully in place, but this has been largely outside the school's control. It was evident during the inspection that all staff are willing and competent to effect improvements, despite the uncertainty about the Nursery's future status. Given the right circumstances, this gives the school a good capacity to improve in future. Local authority staff are aware of the need to help the school address the issues raised. Governance is satisfactory. The school has difficulty recruiting governors but the chair and vice-chair have given loyal and helpful time and effort to support and encourage good provision for the children.

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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?	2
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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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	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?	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

2525th.

25 September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Ashworth Nursery School, Blackburn with Darwen, BB2 1QU

There is a Nursery school on Addison Close, near the big school. It is called Ashworth Nursery. It is your nursery! I came to look at your nursery and to talk to you and watch you play and learn. I think that yours is a good nursery and that you are safe and enjoy yourselves there. The teachers are very friendly and help you to learn and play well.

It was good to see you come in to the Nursery with happy, smiling faces. I know that you like coming here. Your mums and dads told us that they like the Nursery too. They like the way the teachers look after you and give you interesting things to do. I liked the way you play and the way you listen carefully when someone talks to you. I also liked the way that you ride the bikes outside.

The teachers are going to make your nursery even better! They are going to help you choose more for yourselves what you would like to do. They are also going to make playing and learning outside more exciting.

I know that you will keep on enjoying your time in the Nursery. You will learn many new things and grow into big, well behaved children.

I hope that you enjoy your Eid party!

Yours sincerely

Eric Jackson

Lead inspector