

Featherstone Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103139
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	336015
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	69
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jules Gregory
Headteacher	Elaine Dupree
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2007
School address	29 Highcroft Road Erdington Birmingham
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Age group	3–4
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2010
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**Number of children on roll in the registered
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 11 activity sessions, and eight staff were observed working with children. Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff and governors, and inspectors spoke informally to children. The school improvement plan, safeguarding documentation, assessment records including a selection of children's 'profiles', and planning documentation were scrutinised, as was children's work in sessions and on display. Eleven staff questionnaires and 32 parental questionnaires were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the attainment levels of children when they first enter school, and the degree of progress they make in all strands of learning
- what is needed to make teaching better when considering the use of assessment is evaluated as outstanding
- how well the curriculum is adapted to meet the range of different needs including children at the early stages of learning English and boys
- the rigour of self-evaluation and the appropriateness of plans to improve governance of the school.

Information about the school

Although the largest group of children are White British, 16 other ethnicities are represented and there is an increasing number of children who are at the early stages of learning English. A smaller than average proportion of children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Full-time nursery education is provided and children usually spend three terms at the school, before transferring to Reception classes in local primary schools. The Nursery was given a children's centre remit in 2008, providing day-care facilities for children aged 0-3 years. The Children's Centre was not part of this inspection although the headteacher of the Nursery school is also headteacher of the Children's Centre. The governing body manages the breakfast and after-school clubs and these were a part of this inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Featherstone is a good school that provides children with a happy, fun-filled start to their school life. Parents and carers agree, and, as one parent typically said, 'This school provides an excellent variety of experiences, which clearly stem from children's ideas and interest.' The curriculum is outstanding, and the 'floorbooks' show the process of curriculum development, as staff talk to children to discuss their interests, and take on their suggestions. This was evident as the beach cafe was added to the seaside environment, after children identified the need for a drink and an ice cream after spending time in the sun. Excellent use is made of the outdoor area, and whatever the weather, children work enthusiastically outside whether it is gardening, reading in the story shed or using a variety of different wheeled toys. The care of children is given a high priority, and the key worker system effectively ensures parents and carers know which adult to contact about any issues affecting their child.

When children first join the school, their skills and abilities are below those expected for their age, although a minority of them are working at age-related expectations. Progress is good in most of the areas of learning, and by the end of the Nursery year, the majority of children are working at the levels expected for their age. Assessment information is collected regularly in order to influence the planning of new activities, and children's 'profile' books show a good overview of the things that children have learnt. However, this information is not collated rigorously enough to show whether progress is consistent in all 13 strands of learning. Thus, leaders are not able to check if they are providing children with the experiences necessary to accelerate learning even further. Even though progress is good and much good teaching is evident, this is not consistent. Information from assessment is not always used to plan focus work that meets the range of children's needs. During the times when children are involved in their chosen play activities, not all staff strike the correct balance between standing back and joining in to ask probing questions and prompt thinking.

Leaders have successfully made improvements to provision and children's learning since the time of the previous inspection. All staff are committed to ensuring the well-being of all children, and responses to the staff questionnaire show morale is high. Strengths and weaknesses are known although evaluation does not clearly identify the steps needed to ensure weaknesses are rectified. The governing body is supportive, and the chair is very knowledgeable about what needs to be done to improve governance. Information presented to them, for example assessment information, is not precise enough for them to be able to ask challenging questions. However, given the school's track record, accurate self-evaluation and high commitment of staff, its capacity for further improvement is good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of good teaching by:
 - ensuring that all staff plan focused teaching activities which match the range of abilities within the setting, especially in the areas of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, and linking sounds and letters
 - developing the questioning skills of some adults so they are able to extend children's ideas
 - implementing strategies which ensure all children can take an active role in large group activities.
- Sharpen monitoring and evaluation procedures by:
 - providing the governing body with information about children's progress in all 13 strands of learning so they are more able to challenge the work of the school
 - ensuring evaluation rigorously identifies the steps needed to improve provision further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

2

Happy, smiling faces at the start of the school day bear testament to children's enjoyment of school. They play happily on their own or with others, and children from different backgrounds and cultures play together harmoniously. They make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development because of the high priority given to this area of learning. Effective routines enable them to establish good self-help and independence skills. Children make good progress in knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development because staff plan good opportunities for children to investigate and explore. For instance, a group of children built a pirate ship with large construction materials and chatted to one another about the different ways they could board the ship. Following an activity session from Caribbean dancers, children imaginatively invented their own Caribbean dance with a loud drum accompaniment. In communication, language and literacy, children make good progress in developing the skills to enable them to have thoughtful discussions with each other and with adults. Progress in linking letters to their sounds, and in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, however, is satisfactory rather than good. Even so, by the time children are ready to enter Reception, the majority of children are working at levels expected for their age in all six areas of learning, and their achievement is good. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are at the early stages of learning English, make the same progress as their peers because of the good extra support they receive. Boys achieve as well as girls because the staff ensure the curriculum effectively engages their interest.

Trusting relationships with very caring staff ensure children feel safe and secure. Behaviour is good. Children are considerate of each other and use equipment and

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resources safely. They know when to wash their hands and enjoy healthy snacks and lunches. Children are beginning to learn the importance of contributing to the wider community, for example, by taking part in fundraising events such as Red Nose Day and Beep, Beep, a road safety day. Children are developing important skills they will need for future successful learning as they reflect with an adult on what they have learnt, and help to decide what might be the next steps in their learning. This, alongside satisfactory attendance, means children are soundly prepared for the next stage of education.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Children's attainment ¹	3
The quality of children's learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
Children's behaviour	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Children's attendance ¹	3
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

An excellent range of memorable curriculum opportunities in both the indoor and outdoor environment extend and broaden children's experiences extremely well. Areas of learning are linked skilfully together; for example, playing on the pirate ship involved mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development. A wide variety of visits and visitors enhance children's learning

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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and enjoyment. A project with a visual artist encouraged children to develop their artistic skills whilst visits to places of worship including a church, gurdwara, mosque and synagogue helped to increase children's knowledge of the diversity of the community in which they live.

Key worker time at the start of the day ensures all children are welcomed into the setting, and are able to tell someone immediately about something that is important to them. One boy eagerly came to his worker showing a picture of a pirate he had drawn at home, whilst another excitedly handed over a bag of cake and chocolate, as it was his birthday that day. This small group time allows all children to find out what activities are available, whilst reminding children of tasks they may wish to finish. Good teaching produces successful learning for children including those at an early stage of learning English. The bilingual assistant makes sure these children get the most out of sessions. Good partnerships with a range of outside agencies ensure children who may become vulnerable are supported well. Induction procedures are good as the new children receive taster sessions before they start full-time in the autumn term. During the inspection the 'saplings' from the day-care provision were seen enthusiastically working and playing alongside the Nursery age children. This was so successful, one child started to cry when he had to leave.

The rooms and the outside area buzz with a balance of freely chosen play and directed activities. Teaching prompts children to make up their own games, join in with planned tasks such as drawing a treasure map, or getting dressed in pirate outfits ready to board the ship. When teaching is at its best, staff ask children probing questions designed to develop vocabulary and encourage them to think about what they are doing. This was seen in the beach cafe, as children considered the impact of putting ice into their 'cocktail'. When teaching produces satisfactory results it is because questioning is too narrow, and only requires one-word answers. Also in whole group activities, strategies are not used to ensure all children are enabled to take part in activities. In these sessions, there is too much emphasis on 'good sitting' and 'good listening'. Parents and carers are appreciative of the breakfast and after-school clubs that provide a safe and caring environment for their children.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

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The headteacher is determined that each child be treated as an individual. To achieve this, there is a strong sense of purpose in supporting children and their families and striving for improvement. All staff and governors endorse this view, and parents and carers are appreciative of the school's work. Governors are effective in their role of support, and are becoming increasingly involved in finding out the strengths and weaknesses of provision. However, the governing body's challenge is not sufficiently well developed. All requirements for safeguarding children's health and well-being are in place, and meet statutory requirements. Self-evaluation is good in identifying strengths and weaknesses but the recording of action to rectify weaknesses is not as strong. The effectiveness of the school's work in promoting community cohesion is good. Through its work as a part of the Children's Centre, a detailed analysis of the socio-economic, ethnic and religious context of the area has taken place. This has resulted in a good plan to ensure children have many opportunities to become aware of different cultures and traditions within the local community and in the wider world. Leaders are diligent in tackling any discrimination and ensuring that all children enjoy equal opportunity. Children's good achievement and enjoyment clearly show the school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all of the 32 parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are highly

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satisfied with the Nursery. All are especially pleased that their child is kept safe, and appreciate the good teaching and the way the school helps their child to have a healthy lifestyle. All say their child enjoys school and are happy with the overall provision. Inspectors agree with these opinions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Featherstone Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 32 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 69 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	78	7	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	81	6	19	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	56	13	41	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	59	12	38	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	75	8	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	66	10	31	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	75	8	25	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	18	56	12	38	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	50	14	44	2	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	63	11	34	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	56	13	41	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	66	11	34	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	75	8	25	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its children's needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a child in their learning and development.
Attainment:	in other phases of school, for example primary schools, attainment is the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. However, there is no national average for three- and four-year-olds. Therefore, in inspections of nursery schools, inspectors take account of expectations in the age-related bands of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in nursery sessions and over longer periods of time.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 July 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Featherstone Nursery School, Erdington, B23 6AU

Thank you all for making my visit to your nursery so enjoyable. It was good to see how eager you are to learn about all kinds of new things. I was pleased at how much you can do by yourselves - without any help from adults. I think all adults do a wonderful job of finding out about the things that interest you, and then in planning lots of activities that will let you learn more about these interesting things.

I enjoyed watching you learn while you played. I especially liked seeing you play together, while 'boarding your pirate ship' or when drinking 'cocktails' in your beachside cafe. You have great fun both indoors and outdoors, and are very busy all the time, finding out new things. All this fun and hard work mean that, by the time you move to your new school, you have learnt lots of new things which will help you as you grow older. You behave well and know it is important for you to eat good things such as fruit and salad. I saw some of you in the after-school club really enjoying your snack of pasta and salad.

Your headteacher and other adults are good at thinking of ways to make Featherstone even better and I am suggesting some more things to help. Although most teaching is good, I think there would be more good teaching if adults thought more about the questions they asked you. I would like them to think of ways of involving you all in large group activities, as some of you do not always get the chance to join in. More use should be made of the information about what you know already to plan activities that make you all think hard, especially in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, and linking sounds and letters. I have asked those who lead the school to keep a record of all of your learning so they can check carefully you are learning as fast as you can.

Thank you again and you can all help - please keep making interesting comments and coming up with bright ideas when you are playing, so that adults can listen to what you are saying and then they can continue to plan exciting activities that make sure you learn well.

Yours sincerely

Lois Furness

Lead inspector

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