

Walton Lane Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119079
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339336
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

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 of pupils on the school roll	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Shelagh Derwent
Headteacher	Mrs Audrey Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors spent around 50% of their time looking at learning; they observed eight sessions and saw 14 practitioners at work. The inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, a governor and senior staff, and spoke informally with many of the children. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation relating to children's progress and all aspects of management, including safeguarding. The inspectors took into account the responses of 19 staff and 56 parents and carers to the inspection questionnaire.

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

- the progress made by different groups of children, with a particular emphasis on their development of communication skills
- how effectively the Nursery uses assessment to adapt the provision according to individuals' different needs
- the quality of the Nursery's safeguarding procedures
- how efficiently the leadership knits all the strands of provision together to ensure that children enjoy learning and achieve well.

Information about the school

This Nursery school forms the hub of a long-standing Children's Centre which serves a community comprising many different ethnicities and faiths on the outskirts of Nelson. The majority of children attending the school are of White British heritage and the proportion that speak English as an additional language is smaller than the national average. Average numbers of children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The Nursery offers three- and four-year-olds up to 15 hours provision weekly between 7.30am and 6.00pm. In 2009, the Nursery achieved Healthy School accreditation, the Quality Assurance Mark and the local authority Step into Quality award.

The childcare provided on site is managed by an independent company and did not form part of this inspection. A report about the quality of its provision can be found on the Ofsted website.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This outstanding Nursery offers its children high quality all-round provision so that, in the words of a parent, 'They make happy progress in all areas of the curriculum.' It is to the great credit of the exceptional leadership team that the school has responded so well to the rising level of skills with which children join the Nursery owing to the positive impact of the full day care provision offered within the Centre. The majority of children now join the Nursery with the skills expected for their age and leave for their Reception classes, one year later, with higher than expected skills. Those of different abilities and ethnicity, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, all make exceptional progress and achieve outstandingly well. They thoroughly enjoy their time at Nursery and develop into enquiring, reflective and resourceful learners.

All aspects of the Nursery's provision are outstanding, especially the care provided for children as individuals. Also of particular note is the high quality interaction between all staff and the children, through which they quickly grow in self-confidence and independence. The children show pride in their work and think hard about how they can improve their efforts. They automatically ring the bell at the bottom of the slope to alert staff to their arrival in the outdoor area. At the end of free-play times, they swiftly help to tidy up and make their way to their group's carpet when the tambourine shakes and everyone sings, 'Everybody do this.' Children are helpful to each other and offer comfort in times of need.

All staff work exceptionally well as a flexible team, highly focussed on their own areas of responsibility but also alert to what is happening elsewhere in the rooms, and willing to move seamlessly into another role if necessary. This is the result of the outstanding leadership and management which create total clarity of expectations and provide high level training, generous adult/ child ratios and time for staff to carry out administrative work. Practitioners record their observations of individuals' interests and achievements, and use the information to adapt their planning and adjust, for instance, their questioning of different children. The school is very aware that, as yet, staff do not consistently use this information to identify with precision the next steps for learning that each individual needs to take. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the Nursery's work lead to regular reappraisals and actions to improve. The range of provision has increased greatly since the previous inspection and its high quality has been maintained. There is outstanding capacity for the Nursery to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that when recording observations and compiling children's records of

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achievement, staff identify consistently and with precision the next steps individuals should make in their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children learn at a rapid rate because from the moment they arrive they make the most of all the exciting resources available and respond very positively to adults and other children. In the happy, settled environment, with its consistent routines and expectations, children quickly grow in confidence. They take delight in experimentation, thinking for themselves and realising that they have learnt something new. For example, one child was adamant that the 's' on a bag holding a number of items with this as the initial letter was a '2'. After some discussion he laughed with glee as he confirmed his understanding that the symbol was, actually, an 's', explaining that he was 'only joking' at the outset. With such positive attitudes to learning it is not surprising that, of the most recent children to move on to primary school, the majority were already working comfortably within the expectations for the end of Reception in aspects of reading and mathematical understanding and some had already achieved these.

Children become adept at making choices and using their initiative. They understand the need for registering their presence by moving their name card to the relevant board, and are very helpful about showing newcomers where, for instance, to find different mark-making equipment. They listen well to others and greatly enjoy activities such as identifying silly words that rhyme with their own and others' names. They eagerly participate in physical exercise and are aware that this causes them to feel warm and their hearts to beat more quickly. Children are willing to try adventurous fruits at snack time and carefully record their preferences to create a bar chart for future discussion. They behave exceptionally well; they politely ask if the outside door could be shut during carpet time, 'because I'm cold.' They show a mature understanding of others' needs and the capacity to become engrossed in imaginative activities. Children's good attendance reflects their great enjoyment in learning and prepares them well for their next stage of education.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

1

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

How effective is the provision?

A team of highly skilled professionals, who have a thorough understanding of how young children learn best, ensures the provision is of consistently excellent quality throughout the day. The detailed, sharply-focussed planning is firmly based on children's current interests and, through rigorous monitoring, also makes certain that all areas of learning are covered to a high level. Children's key-workers regularly monitor their progress and adapt the overall planning according to their group's needs. However, most practitioners are at an early stage of identifying and recording the exact detail of the next steps individuals need to take to move their learning on even more rapidly than at present. All practitioners deftly adapt activities and their conversations with children to help them make sense of their learning. For instance, discussions arising from one child's discovery of a water-spray bottle resulted in a group of children outlining its acceptable use, thinking about where to go to fill it up and excitedly finding different items to spray. The adult skilfully directed their thinking to find, 'something made of metal' or, 'a football shirt with the number seven on it', thereby extending their learning in a range of different areas. Elsewhere, an extensive conversation opened one child's eyes to the possibilities and potential pleasures of sending her picture home through the post, and to actions she and others would need to take to make this happen. The curriculum is rich in memorable activities, seamlessly links different aspects of learning and is enhanced through visitors, most recently a 'knight in shining armour', and external expertise in dance.

Outstanding care, guidance and support for the children, and their families, begins with the input of the link workers who start identifying their needs before children even join

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the Nursery. As parents comment, 'The staff are genuinely interested in each child.' and 'Nothing is a hassle for them.' Excellent provision to support those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities combines close partnership with a range of agencies, first-class record-keeping and sensitive, highly-purposeful interactions between practitioners and each individual. Above all, staff's high expectations and effective use of praise and reasoning enable all children at the Nursery to flourish.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Exceptionally well-honed leadership and management underpin the Nursery's outstanding effectiveness. The headteacher is highly innovative in her approach to improving the outcomes for all children and extremely successfully in securing just that. Members of the senior leadership team have a complementary range of skills and equally high expectations of themselves and others so that, together, they create a formidable partnership that drives improvement. Rigorous monitoring at all levels, including peer monitoring between practitioners, and governors' monitoring of planning and provision, leads to purposeful discussion and swift changes when necessary. Consequently, leaders have ensured proper attention to diversity and equality of opportunity for all. Clear lines of communication and responsibility support consistency of approach and gain willing flexibility from all staff to ensure top quality provision at all times. The accommodation is sparkling clean. The administration is highly efficient. The food on offer is healthy and appetising. Exacting staff recruitment and regularly reviewed practices, combined with adults' sensitive listening to children, form the foundations of the outstanding safeguarding procedures. The Nursery is at the forefront of a string of activities to promote community cohesion both locally and beyond. For example, it uses the views and needs of children and pupils from surrounding schools as a springboard for improvement. Staff provide parents and carers with plentiful information about the centre's services, the topics being covered by nursery children, how to promote learning at home and their own child's progress. This, combined with staff's ready willingness to talk with them, means that they have every opportunity to become involved in their children's learning.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

In an unusually high response to the questionnaire, parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the Nursery's provision. They greatly appreciate staff's openness and their children's happiness and rate of progress. Inspectors agree wholeheartedly with their positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Walton Lane 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 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 79 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	69	16	29	0	0	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	43	78	11	20	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	58	20	36	2	4	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	60	20	36	0	0	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	35	64	18	33	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	64	18	33	1	2	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	65	16	29	0	0	1	2
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)	30	55	20	36	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	67	17	31	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	58	19	35	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	55	20	36	2	4	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	35	64	18	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	71	15	27	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



01 March 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Walton Lane Nursery School, Nelson, BB9 8BP

Thank you very much for making the other inspector and me feel so welcome when we visited you a few weeks ago. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and are delighted that you, too, all enjoy your time at nursery. We were very impressed with everything that we saw at Walton Lane and have used a very long word, 'outstanding,' to describe how good it is. Perhaps at carpet time your teachers could help you to work out what this word means and to count how many different letters and sounds it has!

One of the best things about your Nursery is how all the adults listen carefully to what you have to say and ask you the sort of questions that help you think about what you are learning. This means that you learn to do new things almost every day and grow very confident about trying things out for yourselves. You are extremely well behaved and very helpful about tidying up or showing other children how to do things. You know lots about how to keep healthy and understand the reasons why adults need to know whether you have chosen to play inside or outdoors.

Your key-workers get to know very well what you like and are not so keen on, and they also keep a good eye on the new things you can do. The adults plan lots of exciting activities that help you to make the best of your time at nursery, but I have asked them to be even more careful about making sure that they note down exactly what each one of you needs to do next to learn even more quickly.

I hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sarah Drake

Lead inspector

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