

Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100005
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	354786
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Marshall

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	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Polly Shields
Headteacher	Bernadette Duffy
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2008
School address	49 Mecklenburgh Square Coram Community Campus WC1N 2QA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors made 11 observations of children working on adult-led activities and observed two teachers, as well as other early years educators. They also observed children working independently. They talked with children as they worked and held meetings with staff, school leaders and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors looked at documents including school policies, children's progress data, attendance figures and school development planning. They also scrutinised children's portfolios and a range of children's work as well as evaluating 68 parental questionnaires.

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

- The extent to which staff use assessment to support and challenge children's learning and secure outstanding achievement.
- The effectiveness of leaders in checking, reviewing and taking actions to raise attainment, particularly in reading.
- The impact of changes in the school's leadership on its effectiveness.

Information about the school

The Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre is situated in the heart of the King's Cross area of London. The centre's facilities include registered day care for 0 to three-year-olds and a nursery for three to five-year-olds managed by the governing body, as well as a children's centre. The children come from both White British families and a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. Almost two thirds of the children speak English as an additional language and of these most join the nursery with little or no English. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, representing a wide range of needs. Children leave to join local primary schools in the term before their fifth birthday. There have been a number of appointments since the last inspection including both the assistant and deputy headteachers.

The centre forms part of a partnership between the Thomas Coram Centre nursery school, maintained by the London Borough of Camden, Coram Parents' Centre, funded by Coram Family, and Kings Cross and Holborn Sure Start Local Programme, funded by the local authority. The centre offers daily drop-ins and crèches to support work with parents. It also provides a range of groups for parents and adult education classes. It opened in 1998 and operates from 10 rooms in a purpose-built building in the London Borough of Camden. Four rooms are allocated to children aged from six months to under three years, babies and toddlers. A maximum of 106 children may attend the nursery at any one time, of whom not more than 36 may be under three years old. The nursery and after-school club is open five days a week from 8:00 to 17:30, for 48 weeks of the year. All children share access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas. There are currently 42 children aged from six months to three years on roll. The nursery and after-school club currently supports a number of children with special educational needs, as well as a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

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

The Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre is outstanding. Since the last inspection, staff and governors have worked hard and successfully maintained the tremendously high levels of care, guidance and support provided for children. There is a very strong focus on every aspect of the centre's pastoral care that ensures that children and their families are extremely well supported. All staff work effectively to ensure that children achieve very well in their learning and develop exceptionally as mature and caring individuals. Right from the start, in Babies and Toddlers, children benefit from very supportive relationships with all staff and display a great deal of enthusiasm for learning.

Children's achievement is excellent because the centre adapts its extremely well-enriched curriculum particularly well, to ensure that every individual's needs are met and all children fulfil their potential. This, along with outstanding teaching, enables children to make excellent progress from their starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage to when they leave to join primary school. Progress is accelerated for those children who have benefitted from a flying start in the Babies and Toddlers as a result of the high quality provision of provision there. All staff know the children's abilities extremely well. This is because of the highly effective checks regularly made on their progress and the considerable skill with which the centre adapts and targets the well-focused support it gives individual children. Adults are skilled at moving on children's learning through extremely good quality interventions as they play. They talk to the children about their learning and discuss their next steps regularly. As a result, children have a very good understanding of what they are learning and how to get better.

While achievement is high, the whole staff work together extremely effectively, supported particularly well by the governing body, constantly looking for ways to improve children's attainment and personal development further. Consequently, staff and governors are leading the school's drive to raise attainment in reading, which for some children is a relative weakness. From below expected starting points when they join, attainment is currently at expected levels by the time they leave the Nursery. After a highly successful initiative to raise attainment in children's calculating, the centre is again working with families to raise the profile of reading, both at the centre and at home. This constant striving to reflect on outstanding practice and to still look for ways to improve, together with leaders' accurate self-evaluation, shows the school has an excellent capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in reading by:

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- ensuring that children have even more opportunities to read, share and enjoy a wide range of stories and books
- promoting the importance of reading and story telling to all children, parents and carers and maintaining this as a high priority across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Throughout the school children achieve extremely well in their personal, social and emotional development. Their behaviour is exemplary, either when working with an adult or playing independently. They show considerable support for one another, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity. Children have exceptional moral and social skills, and their spiritual and cultural awareness is excellent. They are extremely considerate of each other, valuing and celebrating each other's differences. This helps to make the school very safe and welcoming.

Children's considerable enjoyment in learning, ability to work really well together as a team, take responsibility for their own learning and demonstrate considerable independence, along with above-average attendance, are key factors in their extremely strong development of workplace skills. Because of the school's successful strong focus on its pastoral care, children contribute extremely effectively to the school community. This is demonstrated well through their readiness to be involved in looking after the school as well as caring for their learning environment as they look after the gardens and tidy up daily. Opportunities to take a similar level of interest in improving their immediate local community are yet to be as well developed.

Children's understanding of how to stay safe and lead a healthy lifestyle is excellent. This is demonstrated particularly well by the enthusiasm and knowledge children show as they make very good use of the extensive outdoor learning environment to exercise and enjoy their healthy snacks daily. Children talk confidently about the healthy choices they make in what they eat and the benefits provided. For example, one child explained to his friends that, 'Fruit is good for you, it has sugar in but it's good sugar', whilst another observed that, 'Water is good for you, but not dirty water that has got germs in it.'

Children also achieve extremely well academically. They are clear about their learning and frequently talk with confidence about this, sharing their ideas willingly. During a group session on measuring, children were keen to talk to each other as they considered what you can measure and what you might use. They confidently discussed how to use sand timers and demonstrated considerable concentration as they waited to see who's would be 'first' and which would take 'longest'. Their enthusiasm was fuelled by the well-chosen quality resources and the wealth of opportunities planned both indoors and outdoors for them to independently investigate, consolidate and extend their learning throughout the day.

Attainment by the time children leave to join primary school is consistently above average overall in all areas of learning, though less strong in aspects of communication, language and literacy. Whilst children currently reach expected levels in reading, and leaders have highlighted this as an area to develop, this still constitutes good progress from their starting points. Over time, children, including those at the early stages of learning to speak English as additional language, make outstanding progress from starting points that are below expected levels as they enter the centre. The centre ensures different groups and individuals, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are very

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well targeted, enabling them to learn effectively. Consequently, all children make the same excellent progress.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Children's attainment ¹	1
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	2
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

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

How effective is the provision?

Children's tremendous keenness to learn is due in a large part to the exceptionally wide and varied curriculum and consistently high quality teaching. The learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is outstanding. Children freely move between the two as they take ownership of their own learning, keen to explore and investigate all that is on offer.

The extremely creative links planned between subjects help to stimulate and foster children's considerable interest, and provide further opportunities to challenge and stretch their learning. Following several days of talk about rockets and space travel, children suggested making their own rocket and journeying to the moon. The excitement was electric as the children climbed aboard their rocket, packed with items they decided they would need for their journey. Children, including girls, were hooked and showed considerable concentration, as they explored the moon when they landed. Highly effective and targeted questioning by the teacher ensured the most able were stretched as they discussed other planets they might visit and which would take longest to reach. Keen to capture this enthusiasm, the next addition to the adventure became a wide range of books

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stimulating children's ideas for encounters with aliens, as well as non-fiction texts to extend their understanding of space. Opportunities for developing all areas of learning were provided from this one simple starting point. This approach is exceedingly successful and valued extremely highly by children, parents and carers alike.

All staff, in both the Babies and Toddlers and the Nursery, play their part in delivering this rich, stimulating and engaging curriculum. Some of the key features of the outstanding teaching seen are the very good relationships adults have with children, the considerable subject knowledge of the highly trained staff, and the particularly effective questioning adults use to extend and challenge children's learning. Boys and girls alike are fully engaged. The centre has been successful in raising attainment in the basic skills of numeracy and is now focused on reading. Increased opportunities to develop reading skills are already being planned and at end-of-day review meetings staff discuss where opportunities arise to promote reading and story further. Other basic literacy skills and information and communication technology are also very effectively developed.

Children's welfare and personal, social and health needs are catered for tremendously well because the centre works exceptionally closely with parents and carers as well as outside agencies where needed. Key workers build up an extremely close relationship with children and their families, regularly sharing children's progress as well as being there to support when needed. This really is a place where 'every child matters' and staff at all levels go the extra mile to make a difference.

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?

The headteacher, supported exceptionally well by other leaders including the highly effective governing body, provides a clear vision for how the school can move forward. Following a number of key appointments the headteacher has extremely effectively fostered a tremendously positive spirit and a real team atmosphere of 'can do'. As part of the school's extremely effective development planning, leaders at all levels are positively encouraged to take on responsibilities. They are highly involved in analysing the school's results and checking teaching to see where it is most effective in order to share good practice and identify where improvements are needed. As a result, all leaders have an exceptionally clear understanding of the school's overall strengths and weaknesses.

Considerable efforts are made by the school to involve parents and carers in every aspect of the school's work. These extremely strong links are another of the contributory factors

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to the school's outstanding success. The expertise of leaders and staff is shared with other schools to help improve their effectiveness. Leaders are rigorous in ensuring the Babies and Toddlers provision complies with the requirements for registration.

All staff play their part in ensuring that safeguarding procedures are good, and increasingly rigorous evaluations of systems and procedures are being developed to ensure exemplary practice is maintained across all areas. The school's promotion of equality and diversity is excellent. Staff ensure that there is no discrimination between groups so that all children have opportunities to flourish individually and achieve exceptionally well. Leaders have been particularly effective in promoting community cohesion at school and local levels, as well as establishing links with other cultures, ensuring that children can also engage well with others from different countries and backgrounds.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	2
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

The vast majority of parental questionnaires were positive and most of the written comments expressed considerable satisfaction with the school. They commended the caring attitude of the school, the quality of teaching, the progress their children make and how much their children enjoy school. Typical comments included 'My child shows an interest in everything; her progress is remarkable', 'An exceptional nursery, very in tune with the interests and abilities of each child', 'Always open to dialogue; communication is extremely high on the agenda' and 'Excellent centre, excellent staff'.

Only a very few parents and carers reported any concerns with the school. The proportion of parents and carers who agreed that the school helped their child to have a healthy

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lifestyle was lower than other areas. In response to concerns from a very small minority, the centre set up a working party of parents and carers and carried out a nutritional survey of the food on offer. Evidence gathered during the inspection showed that the centre was successful in positively promoting a healthy lifestyle for children, which was acknowledged in many questionnaires.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 106 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	85	10	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	82	12	18	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	55	80	0	15	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	79	13	19	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	57	84	11	16	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	69	18	26	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	66	20	29	3	4	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)	48	71	16	24	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	72	16	24	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	60	23	34	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	59	25	37	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	56	82	10	15	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	91	6	9	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 all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



19 January 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre, London WC1N 2NY

Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work when we visited. We were pleased to hear how much you enjoy coming to the centre and that your teachers and key workers plan such a lot of interesting things for you to do. You get on extremely well with one another and your behaviour around the centre is first rate. You have an excellent understanding of how to be safe and lead a healthy lifestyle. We can see that there are lots of interesting visitors to your school and activities to get involved in, and were especially impressed with how well you look after all the plants in your gardens and the snails and fish in your care. We understand why you think the adults are very good at helping to make you feel really safe and cared for.

The Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre is outstanding. The curriculum planned for you meets your needs extremely well. Teachers and other adults are very good at helping you to make excellent progress in everything you do. The leaders run it particularly well. They know just what needs to be done to make it even better.

In order to help make it become even more successful we have asked the adults to work on one thing:

- Make sure there are lots more books and stories for you to read, share and enjoy.

You can help by continuing to respect each other's values, both in the centre and in later life. Thank you for helping us with our work.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Marshall Lead inspector

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