

Maxilla Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100475
Local Authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	354851
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Taylor

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debbie Walker
Headteacher	Christine Barton
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors made ten observations of children working on independent or adult-led activities taught by four teachers, as well as nursery officers and other support staff. They held meetings with members of the governing body and staff as well as talking to the children as they worked. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers who were bringing their children to school and attended a workshop for parents and children. They looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, attendance and children's progress data, children's individual portfolios and samples and photographic evidence of their past work, local authority reports on the school and safeguarding information. They analysed questionnaires received from 43 parents and carers as well as 12 questionnaires completed by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which children's improved attainment in 2010 is being maintained and whether there are any variations in the progress made by different groups of children.
- The school's evidence of improvements to provision so as to determine the accuracy of leaders' self-evaluation.
- The contribution that leaders at different levels, including governors, make to school improvement and setting future priorities. The contribution that leaders at different levels, including governors, make to school improvement and setting future priorities.

Information about the school

Nursery children come from a wide range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. An above-average proportion of children, about half of all of the children, are from homes where English is not the first language. One in every 10 children has special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Children enter the Nursery at age three and attend full time. Most transfer to primary school in the September following their fourth birthday. The school is designated as a children's centre. The children's centre was inspected as part of a separate inspection. Daily breakfast care and after-school care, provided by a voluntary sector organisation, is available. This was not inspected as 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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Maxilla Nursery provides an outstanding standard of education and exceptionally good care for children. Parents and carers are rightly confident that their children are very settled and happy in this very inclusive nursery and that they make excellent progress, as the following comment from parents typifies: 'We are very pleased with all of the staff at Maxilla and the high level of support, care and education they provide for the family and child.'

Children's achievements are outstanding. Irrespective of their starting points children make excellent progress so that attainment is above average by the time children leave. Children's well-developed basic skills, along with their confidence, independence, enjoyment of school and eagerness for learning, means they are well prepared for primary school.

The outstanding provision is characterised by the excellent accommodation and resources, staff's high expectations of children, a wide range of well-planned indoor and outdoor activities and consistently strong teaching. The nursery has improved significantly since its last inspection, when it was judged to be satisfactory. The most notable improvements include those to teaching, children's achievements, the accommodation and resources and leadership development. Staff, parents and members of the governing body recognise this with such comments as: 'The nursery has been on an incredible journey of improvement.' The headteacher's vision and determination were the force initially driving improvements. Subsequently, the appointment and development of other leaders, strong teamwork, sharing of skills and high quality staff training have meant the school has quickly gone from strength to strength.

Strong leadership combined with accurate self-evaluation, an excellent track record of improvement and an outward looking approach, whereby staff learn from good practice elsewhere, means that the school has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement. Leaders at all levels are not complacent. They recognise that striving to provide the best for the children is an ongoing process that requires them to continuously improve their practice. They have identified the right priorities and acknowledge that they need to build on existing good practice and find even more ways of facilitating and extending learning when children choose their own activities. The inspection also highlighted that although senior leaders have a very relevant set of priorities, some of the school's written plans are not detailed or precise enough.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Bring greater precision to school development planning.

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- Build on the existing good practice to extend children's learning when they choose their own activities. Build on the existing good practice to extend children's learning when they choose their own activities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children's achievements are outstanding. There is a fairly wide spread of attainment on entry to nursery and attainment overall is below that usually found, largely because a higher-than-average proportion of children have additional needs in learning English. Children of all abilities, including those new to learning English and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make exceptionally good progress. Consequently attainment has risen markedly since the last inspection and is now above that usually found. Children's progress in communication, language and literacy and their personal and social development is particularly strong, because of the very good emphasis placed on these areas, which also helps lay the foundations for learning in other areas.

Behaviour and children's ability to work independently and collaboratively with others are excellent. Children thoroughly enjoy coming to school and cannot wait to get inside and get busy. They quickly establish clear routines. They listen well to others, and learn to take turns, to care for each other and to consider the consequences of their actions. Therefore any minor disagreements are resolved quickly and children feel very safe, secure and happy to explore, experiment and take measured risks.

Children learned exceptionally well during adult-led activities, when for example they first predicted which items would float or sink but then had to think again when some heavier items actually floated. Children learned well about positional language through 'finding the frog' activities, noting they found it under, behind, next to or up in the tree. Children develop their speaking and listening skills well when, for example, they learn about rhyming patterns through songs, listen to stories and act out stories such as 'Rama and Sita' and 'The Little Red Hen'.

Children are developing a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They are responding well to the school's current focus on extending their choice of healthy foods. Children's first-hand experience of planting and growing vegetables and regular cooking activities means most are keen to taste new foods. This also supports children's knowledge and understanding of the world very well. During weekly 'exercise time' children participated fully and thoroughly enjoyed moving to the music, keeping to the beat while learning to jump, sidestep and move to the left and right. Children then recognised the changes that exercise had made to their bodies, noting for example that 'my heart is beating fast', or that they were feeling hot and thirsty and therefore needed to rest and have a drink. During other physical activities outdoors children learn exceptionally well, for example to climb steps, slopes and ladders, balance safely and negotiate uneven surfaces. They learn to use space well, as seen for example when children were pushing pushchairs, riding bicycles and scooters while safely negotiating corners, various obstacles and other children playing.

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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	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	2
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	2
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?

Exceptionally good teaching and an outstanding curriculum means children enjoy a very wide range of exciting and stimulating learning opportunities indoors and outside throughout the year. Inspectors therefore understand why one parent wrote, 'My child enjoys waking up to the thought of coming to the nursery.'

The nursery accommodation provides an excellent learning resource. Indoors, small and larger spaces are well designed to facilitate group work and provide opportunities for children to engage in a very wide range of independent play and learning experiences. Activities are very varied and inviting, some being changed on a daily basis. Therefore at the start of each day children quickly find something that interests them, or return to something they had previously enjoyed. As part of a topic on 'growth and ourselves', activities around babies are very popular with both boys and girls. Children thoroughly enjoyed bathing the dolls, brushing their teeth, feeding the twins and putting them down to sleep.

Parents and carers particularly appreciate the outdoor learning facilities. The garden is exceptionally spacious and very well-developed to facilitate learning across all areas. Children can, for example explore and create games for themselves, find space to build or

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to set up a train track, lie on a cushion and look at books, sing songs and make music with an adult, or paint under the gazebo.

Children also benefit greatly from visits, visitors and special events. Friendship Week, for example, which involves journeys to visit other children's homes, involves families particularly well and extends children's knowledge of different lifestyles and life within their local community.

Teaching is outstanding. Nursery staff are skilled practitioners who have a very good understanding of how young children learn best. They work very well as a team, have high expectations of their children, and ensure that they plan activities matched to children's interests, ages and wide range of abilities. Through additional teaching and timely interventions, staff also challenge the more able and support children who need additional help, including those who are new to learning English. Staff give children the right mix of help and encouragement. They teach them to become independent by teaching them how to do things for themselves. During independent activities adults usually keep a good overview of children's progress, though occasionally opportunities are missed to intervene and move learning on.

Assessments are of a very high standard because staff identify clear learning intentions, ask open-ended and probing questions and have a strong focus on planning for learning. At the end of each day staff review children's learning with them in depth, and meet together as a team to share knowledge of children's learning and plan the next steps.

The nursery provides excellent care, guidance and support. Staff ensure that children are safe. They provide a very good standard hygiene and personal care for children. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the personal support that staff provide for their children. Very strong links with external agencies, as well as services provided by the children's centre, assist the school in providing additional support for children and their families in times of need. The school's procedures to promote good attendance have proved very effective so that attendance levels are now consistently above average.

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?

Staff share the headteacher's high expectations and commitment to serving the needs of children, families and the local community. The headteacher, very ably supported by other leaders, provides excellent leadership, a strong steer and the commitment to achieving high standards across the board. Central to the school's success is the creation of a strong

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learning community in which staff are given time and encouragement to develop their own practice and are expected to share their skills with others. All staff make a positive contribution to this learning community ethos.

Governance is good. Members of the governing body support the school well and bring a range of skills to the task. They ensure that statutory requirements are met and safeguarding procedures, including staff training and child protection, are robust and highly effective. Although a number of governors are fairly new to the role, the core of governors are experienced and well informed about the school. Governors play a very strong role in involving parents as well as seeking and responding to their views. They understand the school's strengths and its broad priorities for development, although a lack of precision in the school development plans inhibits their ability to fully evaluate the school's work.

Engagement of parents and carers from a wide range of backgrounds is outstanding. Parents and carers are genuine partners in the children's education because they are invited to share their skills, diverse backgrounds and experiences with all of the children. They attend special events during school time such as the celebration of Eid and St Patrick's Day as well community events such as the Portobello Film Festival. Parents' and carers' suggestions are always welcomed and their concerns listened to. They work alongside their children at the start of each day and help to support their own child's learning through very well-attended and informative workshops.

The school promotes equality of opportunity exceptionally well. Children take pride in their achievements and backgrounds, accept differences and enjoy learning about the lifestyles of others because diversity is valued and celebrated. Leaders track individuals and groups of children's progress and their involvement in activities meticulously. They then take decisive action to ensure that provision is constantly being adapted to reflect children's interests and cater for their different needs and abilities.

The school makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion. The nursery has a very good understanding of its community and works well to meet their needs and bring people together. The nursery itself is a very cohesive community in which firm friendships and a shared understanding are developed among children and parents and carers from very diverse backgrounds. Links with the local and wider communities, including those that staff bring to the nursery, are also strong. Partnerships also make an excellent contribution to developing shared understandings and promoting community cohesion at all levels.

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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	2
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

Parents and carers have extremely positive views about all aspects of nursery provision, as the table below shows. The inspection findings confirm parents' and carers' very positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Maxilla Nursery 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 53 full time children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	77	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	74	11	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	28	65	15	35	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	58	18	42	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	34	79	9	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	65	13	30	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	60	17	40	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)	23	53	17	40	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	60	16	37	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	65	12	28	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	56	18	42	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	77	10	23	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	81	8	19	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



12 May 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Maxilla Nursery, Maxilla Close, London, W10 6NQ

I am writing you a letter to tell you what we found out when we visited your nursery. Thank you for talking to us and being kind to us. We enjoyed finding out about your nursery and watching you working and playing together. Your mums, dads and carers think the nursery is excellent and we agree.

This is what we found:

- You really enjoy coming to nursery and you work very hard with your teachers and by yourselves.
- Your behaviour is excellent.
- You are very happy in the nursery and make lots of new friends.
- The staff make sure there are lots of exciting activities for you to do in the classroom and out in the garden. They listen well to your ideas and act on your suggestions.
- Staff play with you and teach you new things really well. This means your learning is excellent.
- The adults know and understand you and care about you very much. They are very kind to you and quickly notice if you need extra help.
- Everyone in the nursery makes sure that you are extremely safe, happy and well looked after.
- Your headteacher and staff lead the school exceptionally well.

We know the nursery does most things exceptionally well but that adults are always trying to make things even better for you. We are asking them to:

- check how they can help you to learn even more when you are working by yourselves
- in their written plans, explain in more detail how they plan to make the nursery even better.

You can help by continuing to work very hard.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Taylor

Lead inspector

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