

Spencer Nursery School

Spencer Road, Mitcham, CR4 4JP

Inspection dates 27 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Children have a good start in the school and achieve particularly well in their personal and social development so they feel settled and ready to learn.
- Most achieve well in developing their early understanding of number, the enjoyment of reading and sharing books, and physical skills.
- The quality of teaching is typically good and is instrumental in developing children's high levels of confidence and ability to work together happily. Children are keen to communicate through speaking, early mark making and music making.
- Children are curious, courteous and behave exceptionally well. Parents and carers confirm that their children are 'extremely happy', 'settled' and 'love school'.
- The headteacher, supported by governors and staff, ensures there is the right mix of support for children, their parents and carers and for staff so that everyone feels enthusiastic to be a part of the school.
- Governors support the school well and ensure there are good links with the adjacent children's centre, local community and other nearby schools.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching and children's learning are at the highest levels possible, particularly when children are involved in their group work.
- There are weaknesses in some aspects of monitoring which mean that areas of success or areas to improve are not always identified by all staff or governors.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed four sets of activities during the day which take place in the one classroom and outside area. The headteacher jointly observed some of these activities.
- The inspector met with staff, a member of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The school's plans for improvement, safeguarding information, recent local authority notes of visits, records of school leaders' observations of work seen, attendance information and the school's checks on pupils' progress were all looked at by the inspector.
- He looked at the children's 'learning stories' folders and took account of children's work displayed around the classroom.
- The number of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) were too few to generate an overall picture of parents' and carers' views, but the school's recent survey of parents and carers was taken into account along with the five responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Kevin Hodge, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Spencer Nursery School is smaller than the average and shares the site with an adjacent children's centre which is managed by the governing body but did not form part of this inspection.
- The school provides a mixture of full-time and part-time education for children from three months to five years old. Children who are under three are accommodated in the 'Mini Macs' room, which was not inspected and is subject to separate childcare inspection arrangements.
- Older children are taught in one classroom and are known as the 'seniors'. Some start school at 8.00am in the morning, when there is a breakfast provided, and can stay until 6.00pm.
- Children are predominantly White, with a high proportion of mixed White and Black Caribbean heritage. Children of mixed White and Asian and Black British or Black African heritage are also represented in small numbers. A small number of children are at the early stages of learning to speak English.
- No children are entitled to the pupil premium (extra funding for children known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families).
- A very small proportion of children have special educational needs. They are supported at school action plus.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve children's learning and achievement to the highest levels by:
 - ensuring that children's learning is extended further into group activities, particularly in taking every opportunity to extend their speaking and mark-making skills
 - ensuring that the outside activity area has more printed words, for example on signs, directions and information boards, and has a greater range of displays reflecting numbers and shapes to stimulate children's learning further
 - giving more opportunities for all staff to observe the work of others in the school to develop their skills in identifying aspects of teaching and provision which would help improve teaching and children's learning still further
 - governors giving more consistent and quicker information following their visits to help the school identify areas of success and areas to improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the nursery at levels which are broadly typical for their age, although just recently their levels of communication and language ability have been lower than typical for their age than in previous years.
- Children achieve well and make a happy, secure start in the seniors' class where any new arrivals settle down quickly and feel welcomed. Morning arrival routines are well established so that children are ready to learn, often after benefiting from and enjoying eating at the school's breakfast club. When they leave the nursery, they are well prepared for their new schools.
- They enjoy opportunities for them to develop their caring attitudes by playing 'mums and dads' in the home corner and deciding who will 'look after baby'. Simple routines such as counting the number of petals on a Mother's Day card or singing a rhyme such as 'Ten in the bed' develop their number skills well.
- Children relate to others confidently, whether it is helping others balance on the outdoor equipment, where their physical abilities and development are extended well, when using toy diggers in the school sandpit, or by playing simple counting games.
- Those children from different ethnic heritages achieve well as they integrate easily within the class. They receive good quality one-to-one support from adults with activities often tailored to their particular needs.
- Group work activities give children a good variety of learning, aided by adults who supervise and relate extremely well to the children, particularly in supporting their social and personal development. Many speak clearly and confidently, although some are less confident to speak clearly or at length. Early writing skills, for example children writing their own name, develop well, but occasionally these skills are not extended to speed their progress further.
- Children of different abilities are catered for well, particularly the small number who have special educational needs, who benefit from learning in small groups or from one-to-one support with an adult. Children at the early stages of learning English often benefit from fellow children who befriend them, although staff are quick to encourage these children to relate well to others too.
- Many children demonstrate their love of books by readily showing visitors which ones are their favourites, recognising books such as 'Jack and the Beanstalk' or 'A wolf who liked eating pancakes'. They happily share stories with fellow children, recognise the sequence, and enjoy pretending to read to each other and visitors. Some children recognise simple words, reflecting the school's good approach to developing children's listening and early reading skills through teaching basic letter sounds and word shapes.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good, reflected in children's enjoyment of their learning and in the way they develop excellent social skills, along with high levels of spiritual, moral and cultural development.
- Group work is normally well conceived, aided by Early Years Educators who relate extremely well to the children and respond quickly to their needs, particularly if any are distressed or worried.
- Activities in small groups are usually organised and supervised well, both in the classroom and in the outside area, although occasionally staff miss opportunities to combine learning, for example: by extending children's verbal skills more while making Mother's Day cards, spotting those children who might want to write down their thoughts or findings in the science area or in writing a list of construction materials in the digging area.
- Teaching makes good use of the attractive displays and different areas within the classroom to help boost children's learning, for example, children enjoyed using computer programs to spot simple patterns and others looked at seeds and then enjoyed planting them on cotton wool to see how they grow, aided skilfully by the class teacher.
- Outside activities provide a number of opportunities for children to develop their physical abilities

and curiosity such as balancing, throwing activities or by discovering that water will not flow unless one tray is lower than the other. While these provide well for children's physical learning, there are not always enough visual aids such as words, pictures, simple directions, number lines or signs to stimulate their thinking to the same degree found inside the classroom.

- Children enjoy using percussion instruments on the music table and are developing a good sense of rhythm as a result. They also enjoy singing, prompted by class teachers' enthusiastic singing and actions help to develop their hand-eye coordination well.
- Staff keep a close eye on children's progress, and on-going records kept in the children's 'learning story' books provide teachers and parents and carers with a good record of successes and high points in their learning. These are often supplemented with pictures of individual children engaged in activities to give parents and carers a good idea of how well their children are progressing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children behave outstandingly well. They are sensitive to the needs of others and talk courteously to each other and visitors. Excellent welfare arrangements ensure that children feel safe across the school day, whether they arrive early in the morning, leave late in the afternoon or join or leave part-way through the day.
- A number of parents and carers who spoke with the inspector echoed the very positive comments and thoughts of parents and carers who responded to the school's questionnaire. The vast majority are extremely happy with the school, particularly in the way their children feel extremely enthusiastic and willing to attend.
- Children move around their classroom very carefully, sit very sensibly at lunchtime, handle equipment delicately and willingly help clear up when asked to do so by the class teacher and helpers. If there are individual children who feel unhappy or become slightly isolated from others, other children are often seen to befriend them or to play with them until they are smiling and more settled.
- When children are outside the classroom, they move around different bits of large equipment extremely carefully, often queuing very sensibly to allow others to move along unaided or in waiting patiently to take turns at using equipment such as the play diggers in the sandpit.
- The school reports that there have been no instances of bullying or racist incidents reported by children, staff, parents or carers, reflecting the school's excellent promotion of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school ensures that discrimination of any sort is not tolerated and wherever possible all children have equal opportunities to succeed.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, supported by all staff and governors, has succeeded in maintaining the good levels of teaching and outstanding levels of children's behaviour and safety since the previous inspection. Staff say they feel valued and part of the Spencer team and felt that senior leaders were effective in the way they lead and manage the school. Staff appreciated new arrangements to support their work through regular supervision sessions with other members of staff.
- Teaching is monitored regularly and accurately by the headteacher, but not always by other members of staff. They are not always involved enough in this process in order to help them to become more skilled in observing others, in identifying good practice or seeing where improvements can be made to the quality of teaching.
- Links with the adjacent children's centre and those running provision for the nought to three age groups called 'Mini Macs' enable the school to have an excellent understanding of any children arriving and their particular needs. This helps them to settle in quickly and for any specific needs to be addressed quickly. Links with other local schools are developing, particularly in helping staff to visit local schools in order to observe different practice.
- The local authority, recognising the school's level of effectiveness, provides light touch but useful

support.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors continue to give the school good support, and the fact that they also manage the overall provision of the site means that the different parts of the provision work together well. They visit the school regularly, particularly the Chair of the Governing Body, but these visits are not always recorded consistently or promptly to enable both successes and areas needing development to be recognised quickly by the school. Governors have a good overview of how salary progression and promotion relate to the quality of teaching and performance of the headteacher. Recent training enables them to know how the school's performance compares to others' and also in ensures that they are up to date in their knowledge of safeguarding routines. Although the school receives no additional pupil premium funding, governors are nonetheless well briefed on the finances of the school to ensure that the school provides good value for money. Checks on staff appointments are carried out rigorously and ensure that site security and safety and child protection aspects are reviewed regularly and to a high standard.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	102955
Local authority	Sutton
Inspection number	400578

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	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Corole Cook
Headteacher	Fiona Downing
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 June 2010
Telephone number	020 86484126
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