

Oliver Thomas Nursery

Matthews Avenue, London, E6 6BU

Inspection dates 2–3 July 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 happy and stimulating time, learning both inside and outside. This helps them to make good progress and achieve well.
- They become independent, enthusiastic learners and develop very good physical skills; they climb and jump well and use small construction kits deftly.
- Children behave extremely well, they love each other's company and work together cooperatively, often helping each other to share and take turns. They know what they need to do to keep safe and secure as they play.
- Nursery staff support disabled children and those with special educational needs well and ensure they are included in all activities.
- Teaching is good and staff help children develop the skills to prepare them both for entry to Oliver Thomas and transition to their next school.
- Leaders analyse astutely what works and what needs improvement in the nursery. They have clear plans for development and these are already making a difference, for example, in the improvements in children's mathematical attainment.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the nursery and appreciate the individual attention their children receive.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Adults do not use a wide enough range of strategies to develop children's language skills.
- Children are not always challenged to think at a high enough level.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed over 10 hours of activities during the two days, often with either the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors met staff and members of the governing body. Governing body minutes and other documents were scrutinised.
- The school's plans for improvement, safeguarding records, attendance information and tracking information of pupils' achievements were all looked at by the inspectors.
- Inspectors looked at the children's special books and took account of their work displayed around the classroom and being produced during the inspection.
- The number of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, was too few to be displayed, but a good number of parents and carers spoke to the inspectors and seven wrote to the inspection team. There were 15 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Penny Holden, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Maria Coles

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The nursery is of average size with 190 children aged between three and four years attending for 15 hours a week. Most come for either morning or afternoons but a handful attend for two and a half days. The majority spend a year in the nursery.
- Over 90% of children come from ethnic minority backgrounds, the large majority of whom are at an early stage of English language acquisition.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs who are supported through Early Years Action is in line with schools nationally.
- All children are educated on site. The school does not use alternative provision to assist any of its children.
- There is a children's centre located on the same site, managed by the governing body and the headteacher, that did not form part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the level of questioning to extend children's thinking and to improve their understanding as they take part in activities.
- Improve the strategies used by adults to promote language skills across all aspects of the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils delight in learning, whether inside or out, and become independent and confident during their time in the nursery. They stay absorbed in activities for a good length of time and readily share what they are doing with adults and their friends.
- The vast majority of children enter school with skills that are below age-related expectations and whatever their background or home language, they make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development, in aspects of language and in mathematics.
- Some of the children who arrive at the nursery with the lowest levels of skills make very good progress; these include the Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan pupils. Children make above average progress when the school gives them particularly high levels of intervention. As a group, children of Pakistani origin make somewhat slower progress than other groups, which the school is addressing.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs make good progress overall because of the support they receive and they are included in all activities. Children automatically make space for the wheelchair of a child so that she can join in the singing activity with the group.
- Attainment is best in understanding within communication and language, physical development and mathematics. Children can throw accurately, balance, jump and move in a variety of ways. They use their hands well and have developed excellent grips so that they all hold pencils correctly. Children find lots of opportunities to count and are proficient at this: one girl accurately counted all the 28 children in the session, and remembered to include herself.
- Many of the children arrive at the nursery with very little English and make very good progress, especially in listening and understanding. While children have many opportunities to look at books and to listen to stories both in the classrooms and in the special reading corners and wigwams outside, adults do not use a broad enough range of strategies to develop children's language skills by, for example, modelling new words and full sentences and then getting children to repeat them back.

The quality of teaching is good

- Parents and carers rightly comment about the good teaching. They appreciate the love and care their children receive from staff.
- Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of how young children learn and develop, and are extremely good at nurturing and giving care and attention to all. They readily enter into conversation with the children and pay careful attention to what they are doing.
- The experiences given to the children are carefully planned across the whole early years curriculum and provision is assessed half way through each week to see if it is giving the children the learning opportunities staff want. Where developments are possible staff readily make them; during the inspection the 'exploding fizzy coke' experiment was such a success with the children, staff extended the experiment the next day to include a range of other fizzy drinks.
- Children have a free choice of activities with access to all areas of the nursery, inside and out, and chose these with confidence. Adults also select other activities for children. Leaders recognise that the current system for recording the activities children engage in needs further development to ensure that they have a consistently rich and wide experience.
- Most of the teaching observed was good and this matches evidence from the senior leaders about what it is typically like and reflects the assessment information about children's progress over time. Mathematical experiences are very good with children embarking on exciting number hunts and adults finding lots of opportunities to get children to count and use numbers.
- Physical activities are imaginative; staff encourage safe but exciting movements on the high apparatus and the thick mats allow the children to be inventive when jumping off. Children also

learn how to be very gentle and controlled; they handled the snails they were examining slightly gingerly but with great care. The adult questioned the children about the snails well to make them observe carefully, which got them involved and interested. One girl was so intrigued she researched snails with her parents in the evening and brought what she had found out the next day.

- Staff do not always demand enough of the children; opportunities to improve and develop the children's language acquisition further are missed, for example, they accept and echo children's one word responses, rather than modelling how the word would work in a sentence.
- Some opportunities to extend children's knowledge and to get them to use higher levels of thinking are missed as staff do not always ask follow-up questions.
- Adults work together very well and provide a very happy environment for learning; children are secure in working throughout the nursery, inside and out, and develop good friendships with adults and other children.
- Staff can be very responsive to pupils' learning needs. When a teacher realised that the group of children she was working with found the rhyming work she had planned much too easy she abandoned the activity and told them she would come back with something more exciting.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children's attitudes to learning are exemplary; they are curious, inquisitive and independent, jumping at any opportunity to join in and try opportunities offered.
- Their behaviour is excellent, and considering their very young age they are thoughtful and care for one another. One boy, who was skilfully cutting play dough into very small pieces with a plastic knife, noticing the boy next to him was having difficulty cutting his, swapped knives saying 'My knife cuts well'. At the water play, a boy intervened when he heard two children quarrelling over a toy, demonstrating separation with his arms and saying, 'No, we share!'
- Children are interested in visitors; greeting them shyly, but friendly and politely. They are respectful to one another and to adults. The football coaches are excellent male role models and add to the children's opportunities to develop a range of relationships in school.
- Behaviour management strategies are positive and effective and any poor behaviour is handled sensitively as the children's young age requires and in line with school policy. Evidence over time shows that the consistent and positive approach to managing the odd incident of challenging behaviour has brought about long-lasting improvements in individual children's conduct.
- Parents and carers, staff and governors are positive about behaviour and safety within the school. Many parents and carers spoke to inspectors to express their views and a good number wrote letters. One parent or carer said that her children felt Oliver Thomas Nursery was their second home because they always felt comfortable and happy there.
- Children feel secure in school and know how to keep themselves safe, for example, they can explain why they cannot go outside until the gates are locked at the beginning of each session. They understand why they cannot jump off the apparatus immediately after someone else has jumped.
- Attendance, while not compulsory at this stage of education, has improved significantly since the new procedures to monitor attendance and work with parents and carers have been in place this year.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong drive for improvement led by the headteacher, who is now in her second year at the school, is embraced by the deputy headteacher, governing body, parents and carers and most staff. All are committed to giving every child a happy and rewarding experience while they are at Oliver Thomas Nursery School and staff work hard to build strong relationships with parents and carers.

- The senior leadership team makes well-focused assessments of the effectiveness of all aspects of the nursery. Self-evaluation is perceptive and accurate and the correct areas for improvement are identified. Leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching are accurate and they have been effective in tackling areas for development. For example, mathematics was identified as an area for staff development and after a year of work children's attainment in mathematics is now a strength.
- The reflective and evaluative work of the senior leadership team has meant that the school has adapted well to the new early years curriculum guidance and the requirements for assessment.
- The new progress tracking system is used exceptionally well to analyse pupils' attainment, to identify patterns of performance and to adapt the curriculum and drive the school improvement plan. The analysis enables individual children or groups of children, for example pupils from a Pakistani background, to be given extra help if they appear to be falling behind their peers. It allows the school to give parents and carers excellent information about how well their children are doing. Staff training for all is now closely linked to the analysis of these data.
- Senior leaders regularly observe teaching and give accurate feedback which staff reflect on and use effectively to improve their practice. The outcomes of these observations are also used to decide on the content of future staff training sessions.
- Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.
- Staff are well deployed for the benefit of the children. Equal opportunities are rigorously promoted, discrimination tackled and no pupil is denied access to anything. They have a rich learning experience, are taken on exciting trips and have interesting visitors, including the professional football coaching, which they love.
- The local authority provides light touch support for the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body gives the school good support and challenge. It manages the overall provision of the site so that the children's centre and the nursery work together well. Governors visit the school regularly, particularly the Chair of the Governing Body. The governing body has recently been reconstituted for stability and to provide a greater role for parents and carers. Governors have a good overview of how salary progression and promotion relate to the quality of teaching and performance. They have worked well with the headteacher to resolve difficult staffing issues. Although the school, as a nursery, receives no additional pupil premium funding, governors are 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. The governing body minutes show that they regularly challenge the performance of the school and are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements.

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	102706
Local authority	Newham
Inspection number	400565

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jennie Marzetti
Headteacher	Julie Humphries
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 June 2010
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