

Rachel Keeling Nursery School

Bullards Place, London, E2 0PS

Inspection dates 21–22 November 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Children's achievement is outstanding. From starting points which are often very low, children leave the nursery demonstrating a range of skills above those typical of four-year-olds.
- This is a school where everyone, adults and children alike, talks about learning. This leads to a deep understanding of what exceptional learning looks like and how to bring it about.
- Teaching is inspirational and exceptionally thorough. Children's achievements from one day are followed up the next in order to consolidate their learning. This ensures that children are really secure in the skills they demonstrate.
- Leaders support teachers exceptionally well in continually refining their understanding of how young children learn. This leads to exemplary practice.
- The school is forward thinking. Leaders think carefully about how to put theories, from academics and thinkers in the field of young children's learning, into practice in effective, and often innovative, ways.
- As a result, the school has continued to improve since its last inspection.
- Parents and carers have nothing but praise for how much the school has done for their children and how safe and happy children feel there. In discussions with the inspector, comments such as 'My child feels this is her second home' were commonplace.
- Children behave exceptionally well in all the different social situations they find themselves in during the course of their school day.
- Children are so keen to learn they arrive at school in the morning with smiles on their faces and get involved in purposeful activities straight away.
- The school also understands the importance of supporting families, especially those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Highly skilled staff and links with outside agencies make this support extremely effective and the impact this has on children's learning is clearly demonstrated.
- Governors are integrally involved in supporting school leaders to continually evaluate and refine provision so that children continue to do really well.
- The school promotes attendance well and it has increased since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 sessions of varying lengths encompassing a wide range of activities taught by teachers, teaching assistants and other adults. Five of these observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. The inspector saw children learning in small groups, larger groups and independently.
- Discussions were held with staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 27 responses to the online Parent View survey and the views expressed by the many parents and carers spoken to during her visit. Recent surveys conducted by the school were also taken into account.
- The inspector looked at evidence of children's work both from last year and so far this year in the observations the staff have made of them and the special books compiled by staff and parents and carers to chart the course of children's learning.
- A range of documents were scrutinised including the school's self-evaluation and development planning, documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding and child protection, attendance figures, minutes of meetings of the governing body and information about the progress children make.

Inspection team

Jeanie Jovanova, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This nursery school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The school offers both full-time and part-time places. Most children attend for four or five terms, starting in either January or September.
- A high proportion of children are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of children who are disabled or have special educational needs supported through early action is higher than average, as is the proportion supported through early action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- As reflects the diverse nature of the local community, a high proportion of children are from ethnic minority backgrounds, with the largest groups being of Bangladeshi and Black African origin. A high proportion of children speak English as an additional language, many of whom are at the early stages of learning English when they start school.
- The headteacher has recently begun to provide support to other local schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share more widely the school's highly developed skills of meeting the needs of all children and making teaching inspirational so as to contribute further towards local and national school improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children join the nursery with skills that are considerably lower than the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning, and a number of children have complex needs, especially in speech and language.
- Due to outstanding teaching, an exceptionally well-planned learning environment and a highly engaging curriculum, they make rapid and sustained progress to leave with skills that are at and often above the levels typical of four-year-olds.
- The school successfully promotes a love of reading. High-quality books are placed throughout the nursery and children regularly refer to them while planning and carrying out their work. For example, books on architecture are prominently displayed in the construction area and children look at pictures and plans of buildings and skylines to gain inspiration for their own creations.
- The school is passionately committed to promoting equal opportunities so that all children have an equal chance of achieving success in life. Consequently, children who are known to be eligible for free school meals and others whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable make rapid progress and the gaps between them and other groups in school have narrowed, and often been eliminated, by the time they leave Rachel Keeling.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs who are supported through early action make accelerated progress because the school carefully identifies what they need and supports their development exceptionally well.
- Equally, disabled children and those with special educational needs who are supported through early action plus make rapid progress because the school meets their needs exceptionally well and liaises highly effectively with other agencies to ensure that children, and their parents and carers, get the full range of support available to them.
- Children who speak English as an additional language, including those at the early stages of learning English, make exceptionally good progress too. The school ensures that children, as well as their parents and carers, know that the language skills they bring to the nursery are valued. Words from children's home languages are included in songs, for example, and parents and carers are encouraged to contribute to their child's home/school book in their first language. This positive and language-rich environment creates the perfect backdrop for the school to be able to focus on ensuring children acquire a high level of standard English and an exceptionally broad vocabulary by the time they leave the nursery.
- Children from all groups, including Bangladeshi and Black African, make equally good progress, reflecting the school's determination to eliminate discrimination.
- More-able children also make good progress because, in keeping with the school's commitment to providing equality of opportunity for all, their needs are equally carefully met. For example, one group have special story sessions with the headteacher where they are highly successful at blending letters to read simple words.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because staff have a deep understanding of how young children learn and develop and this informs everything that they do.
- Staff have very high expectations of what children can accomplish. They plan exciting, ambitious activities based on interests that the children have expressed, taking into account the skills children need to develop to make leaps forward in their learning. They use correct, technical language in all subjects and expect children to use it too. In a music lesson, children were able to use the terms 'bass' and 'tone' when drumming and children spontaneously used words such as 'meteorite' when making up stories about dinosaurs.
- Staff plan together, pooling their high level of expertise and their knowledge of the children to ensure that activities promote skills across as many areas of learning as possible. For example,

expressing an interest in cars, children were given the opportunity to see how the components of a real car work, turning knobs and switches, and listening to and looking at the engine. They then visited a local mechanic to ask about how cars are repaired. This led to them drawing designs for their own cars and explaining, often using letters and symbols to represent what they wanted to say, what components they had included and why. Finally they made their models, measuring carefully to scale so that plastic people would fit snugly inside.

- The need to teach children specific skills and knowledge is carefully balanced with the desire to help them find things out for themselves and develop creative thinking and problem-solving strategies. Staff are extremely adept at getting this balance right. They listen as much as they talk and their questioning encourages children to think, justify and explain their understanding. It is this approach that leads children to make such rapid progress and ensures they are constantly engaged and motivated.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are extremely well promoted across all areas of learning. Direct teaching is precise and matched to children's starting points so they learn new concepts quickly. This is followed up by a range of opportunities, both inside and outside, for them to practise this new learning, which deepens their understanding. Many types of writing materials are available. In the construction corner, half the floor is covered in strong paper, taped down. Half an hour after the start of the school day, all available spaces are filled with children's writing. This is because children see writing as an integral part of learning and want to record what they are doing.
- All available space is used for learning. The outdoor environment is particularly important as many children live in flats so do not have opportunities readily available to experience the natural world. The school understands this. Children can sit around a campfire and cook fish or make hot chocolate; there is a large tree trunk imported from the countryside for them to climb on; there is sand and lots of water play. In this way, no experience is overlooked and children develop a deep understanding of living creatures and natural materials.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children show exceptionally positive attitudes to learning throughout the school day, in small groups, large groups or learning independently, inside and outside and across all areas of the curriculum. They sustain high levels of concentration and think carefully about how to solve problems and secure their understanding of whatever they are exploring.
- Relationships among children and between children and adults are exceptionally good because the school fosters them particularly well. There is an atmosphere of trust and respect and everyone in the school community takes time to listen to and consider each other's views.
- Children have very good manners. Lunchtimes contribute to this significantly. Children help to lay the table, serve themselves and take part in polite conversation. China crockery, tablecloths and groups of a manageable size, each led by an adult who sits and eats with the children, create a calm and cultured atmosphere where children learn the art of conversation as well as courtesy and turn-taking.
- Parents and carers are unanimous in saying that their children are safe and that behaviour is good. Children feel safe and say that everyone is kind to one another. They know what to do if anyone is unkind and their mature responses, including talking over any disagreements before they become big issues, ensure minor issues never escalate. Children who have particular behavioural needs are extremely well supported, resulting in dramatic improvements in their ability to work and play well with others.
- There is a strong focus on learning how to stay safe. Children have opportunities to use equipment such as saws and glue guns, and to climb on a range of equipment and natural materials, and are taught to do so with care and thought. Parents and carers said the idea of children being exposed to these dangers initially worried them. They are now full of praise because they realise that it is so much better to learn to handle situations safely than not to be exposed to them at all.

- All of the parents and carers who responded to a recent school survey agreed that the school promotes attendance well, and recent figures show an improvement since the previous inspection. The school has stringent procedures for following up absences, especially for the most vulnerable pupils.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's high expectations, vision and ambition are shared by all staff in a constant drive to secure outstanding outcomes for all pupils. The school never stands still in its pursuit of innovative practice to further inspire children in their learning and uses research and the staff's sharing of their own practice to underpin all that it does.
- All leaders are acutely aware of what the school does well and continually seek to fine-tune key aspects of its work. Development planning is thorough and ensures that staff are increasingly involved in the school's drive for improvement.
- Teachers' performance is exceptionally well managed. Roles and responsibilities are allocated according to teachers' strengths and outstanding practice is shared so all children benefit from it. Leaders support teachers in thinking deeply about their work and celebrating their successes. Some exceptional examples of learning have been published in professional journals, which are beginning to extend this outstanding practice further afield.
- The school works closely with its partner schools in the teaching alliance that they have formed. This further strengthens opportunities to share exemplary practice and develop a learning community of exceptional quality.
- The curriculum is inspirational. The simplest things are turned into great adventures full of language opportunities and chances to experience as much as possible across all areas of learning. For example, visiting the market to buy a watermelon turned into a challenge of logistics as the children had to figure out how to get such a heavy object back to school before they could touch it, taste it, draw it, measure and weigh it.
- The school works exceptionally well to support parents and carers and encourage high levels of involvement in their children's learning. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work and are emphatic about how the school ensures their children make outstanding progress.
- The school's work with more vulnerable families is exemplary. Through members of staff's visits to families in their own homes, when appropriate, and close links with local agencies, the school ensures that a range of issues are dealt with. Staff also help parents and carers to gain any extra support to which they are entitled. All these measures clearly enhance their quality of life which, in turn, leads to a more positive home environment and contributes to children's achievement and well-being.
- The school has a very positive relationship with the local authority, which uses the school's outstanding expertise to disseminate exemplary practice to nearby schools. The school deserves to play an even stronger role in improving the quality of nursery education locally and nationally.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are an integral part of the school's success. They provide support and challenge in equal amount to senior leaders, expecting detailed answers to probing questions. Governors take every opportunity to liaise with those responsible for nursery education throughout the country in order to keep abreast of current thinking and measure the performance of their own school. They support the headteacher in managing the performance of staff in order to sustain the high quality of teaching and understand that progression up the pay scale is dependent on meeting stringent targets. They are aware of how underperformance has been successfully addressed in the past and why children's achievement is now outstanding. They take safeguarding extremely seriously, ensure that the school meets all requirements and that training is delivered more often than guidelines recommend. Governors are adept at managing financial resources so that they have the greatest impact and use their skills, honed through relevant training, to maximum effect to help to shape the practice in this outstanding school.

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	100886
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	425580

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	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clare Barnett
Headteacher	Ben Hasan
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 February 2011
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