

Dorothy Gardner Centre

289–293 Shirland Road, London, W10 6NQ

Inspection dates 14–15 January 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is popular with parents and carers who told inspectors that they appreciate the warm relationships between school and home.
- Children achieve well at their time in the school, making good progress in their learning from starting points which are often well below those typical for their age.
- The teaching is consistently good. Children, including the most able, do well because activities are planned to take account of their differing interests and abilities.
- Activities are varied and inviting, with good opportunities for the children to learn language and number skills both indoors and outdoors.
- The school keeps the children very safe. They feel secure and confident.
- The children behave well and are ready to share and take turns. An adult is always on hand to sort out any tiff or tumble.
- Activities promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, giving them a sense of wonder and awe at the world around them.
- The Blue Room is very well managed, and teaching and activities in this special unit are excellent.
- The nursery school runs smoothly and efficiently, with leaders providing well for the children's varied timetables and lengths of stay.
- The school is well led, particularly by the headteacher. Children's progress is accurately measured. Senior leaders and governors ensure that there is a clear link between the pay teachers receive and the good progress made by the children.
- Senior leaders and governors know their school well and understand both its strengths and areas for improvement. Their plans are sharply focused and cover the right priorities. The school is well placed to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Activities do not always develop children's language and number skills as much as they could.
- The responsibility for checking the quality of the teaching is not sufficiently shared among all leaders, particularly middle leaders.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed the work of the nursery jointly with the headteacher, looking at the children's learning in the indoor and outdoor play areas. They also observed the children eating lunch, tidying up, and participating in structured group story-time sessions. They also attended the before- and after-school childcare provision.
- Meetings were held with the deputy headteacher, the disability and special needs coordinator, a representative of the local authority, and the Chair of the Governing Body and Vice Chair. The inspectors took account of the views of staff in 14 questionnaires.
- There were two responses to Parent View, the online survey of the views of parents and carers, too few for results to be analysed. The inspectors spoke to a number of parents and carers during the inspection.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including: the school's own views of how well it is doing; its plans for the future; information on the children's attainment and progress; safeguarding information; and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Natalia Power, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fiona Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Dorothy Gardner Centre is an average-sized nursery school that is part of the Queen's Park Children's Centre. The children's centre is managed by the headteacher and is subject to separate inspection. The headteacher manages it as part of her remit to lead five children's centres in the North West area of the city.
- The school is federated with a nearby nursery school. Staffing and leadership are separate, but there is a single governing body.
- The before-school and after-school childcare are managed by the governing body, and both were observed as part of the inspection. There is also provision for children under the age of three, and this is subject to separate inspection.
- A third of children attend full time, while others attend for varying lengths of time. The school operates throughout the year.
- Around two out of five of the full-time children attending the nursery school are entitled to free school meals, and this proportion is higher than usual.
- Most children come from a wide range of heritages, and around three quarters speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of children supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- There is special resourced provision for up to 12 children on the autistic spectrum, called the 'Blue Room'. The unit houses a classroom, a room equipped for physical activities and an activity room.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that the adults seize every opportunity to bring out the children's language and number skills whenever they help the children with their activities.
- Make sure that all the teaching is outstanding by involving all school leaders, including the middle leaders, in checking its quality.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children do well at their time at the school. They start with language, number and social skills that vary, but which are generally well behind others of the same age. Through good teaching, the children learn the rudiments of reading, writing and number work, and quickly learn to get on with one another. They leave the school with skills that equip them for starting the next stage of schooling not far behind others of their age.
- Children who attend the Blue Room receive excellent specialised support that enables them to make exceptional progress, for example in developing physical coordination and acquiring speaking skills.
- Children who attend the main nursery achieve well because the adults know them well, and plan together effectively to provide activities that are designed to bring out the best in each child.
- The school's provision for children of all abilities and with a range of additional needs demonstrates its commitment towards equality of opportunity. Those with a range of complex additional needs receive caring support, and learn well because the adults go to enormous lengths to make sure that they are included in all activities. This ensures that there is no discrimination.
- The high proportion of children who speak English as an additional language do well because they receive support in groups or individually which enables them to catch up quickly in their fluency.
- Reading is a priority in the school. Reading plays an important part in providing a calm winding-down time in the after-school care session. In the nursery, the daily story-time sessions are designed to introduce children to the joy of reading. It was lovely to see the most-able children eagerly finding words that rhyme with the title of their reading book, 'Hairy Maclary in Donaldson's Dairy'. Their pleasure when they came up with words such as 'scary' helped them to develop an understanding of sounds and letters.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is consistently good.
- Children's number skills are developed well. In one game, for example, children rolled balls down a gutter, and the adult encouraged the children to count the balls as they rolled, and to describe the shapes of the crates they were standing on as rectangles. In an indoor activity, younger and less-skilled children were taught simple subtraction by singing 'Five little monkeys jumping on the bed' while bouncing toy monkeys on a blanket and helping to remove them one by one.
- Children's language skills are also usually stimulated successfully. For example, the adults who sit and eat with the full-time children at lunch encourage them to talk about what they learned in the morning, and to use full sentences when asking for food.
- Occasionally, particularly when adults are helping children with such practical skills as cutting and sticking, adults help the children with their immediate activity, but do not always ask them to describe the activity in their own words, or get them to count objects, or say whether they are larger or longer than other objects.
- Children who attend the Blue Room receive the highest quality teaching. The classroom is free from distractions. Children have well-planned resources, with picture cards to help them to understand what they are going to learn and to know when they move to a new activity. The adults speak clearly and simply, reinforcing such concepts as 'your turn' and 'my turn' without cluttering or confusing the messages. The children benefit from visiting the nursery floor, learning to socialise with others, and joining in a wider range of activities.
- The outdoor areas are used as flexibly as the indoor play spaces to give the children a wide range of learning experiences. For example, it was lovely to see how children made their own designs for using wooden boxes and planks creatively. One child showed the inspector a house

he had designed, and told her he had equipped it with 'two blankets and two bowls for my dog and cat'. He took pride in creating a comfortable home for the toy animals. Such activities promote the children's imagination and develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural qualities well.

- The adults check children's progress carefully, recording their findings on paper and in photographs, and these records provide a valuable link between school and home.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The children's behaviour is good. Children from all heritages and backgrounds get on well with one another and are usually ready to share and take turns. It was lovely to see a group of boys cooperating to build a wooden railway track. Behaviour is not outstanding, however, because, very occasionally, the children become restless. The adults step in quickly to sort things out, and all is calm again. The school records show there is no bullying or name-calling.
- The school's work to keep the children safe and secure is good. All the staff are trained in paediatric first aid. Medical needs, including food allergies, are prominently displayed. The building, with its many stairs, is not an easy environment for young children, some of whom have physical difficulties. The school is effective in keeping the children safe, watching them carefully and providing help for them on the stairs. A short flight of stone steps in the outdoor play area is fenced off, so that children cannot accidentally fall down while running. Parents and carers told the inspectors that they are confident that the school is safe.
- Children who stay for lunch are taught good manners. They sit at family-type tables, with a proper tablecloth, eating nicely with a knife and fork, and serving others as well as themselves.
- At the end of each session, the children cooperate in tidying up, taking responsibility for ensuring that the play areas are clean and neat. Children also take responsibility for cutting up fruit for snack time, and learn important lessons about hygiene as well as manners.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership is good. Leaders have created a stable team that provides a caring environment for all the children. As a result, the children feel secure and behave well.
- Leaders check the children's progress accurately to make sure that all make good progress and receive the right support for their needs. Leaders and managers of the Blue Room have an excellent understanding of the needs of the children and how to provide successfully for them, working in highly effective partnership with a range of outside agencies.
- Leaders know their school well and are accurate in pinpointing its strengths and what remains to be done. Their plans are sharply focused on improvements and are clear about how to secure them.
- Leaders have fully met the recommendation from the previous inspection to get the children using information and communication technology confidently. Inspectors saw a range of electronic equipment used to promote enjoyable and effective learning.
- The headteacher, who has a wide range of responsibilities in addition to running the nursery school, manages staff performance well, checking regularly on the performance of all the adults, not just the teachers. She makes sure that all those whose work has been observed know what their strengths are and what they need to do to get even better. She has also introduced an effective programme of peer observations, so that all the staff have the chance to observe specific activities and to get ideas for improving the quality of the tasks provided for the children.
- However, other leaders, particularly middle leaders, are not always involved enough in observing activities and checking the quality of the teaching. As a result, for example, teaching does not always enable children to develop their speaking and number skills fully.
- The local authority knows the school well and judges it to be good. It provides suitable support

for a good school.

- The curriculum is wide-ranging. Children have opportunities to learn how to hold a pencil and begin the process of writing, and to count and learn about the world around them. The garden, with its opportunities for studying insects and small creatures, is a valuable resource. Children's physical skills are developed well in the outdoor play areas, with opportunities for jumping, balancing and climbing. In the Blue Room, children have soft shapes for balancing and rocking, enabling them to develop their physical coordination.
- The school is respected in the local community and has good links with parents and carers. All those who spoke to the inspectors spoke favourably of it, and a typical comment from one was, 'My child is stimulated from the start of the day to the end.'
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school and the community it serves very well. They take an active interest, visiting the school wherever possible.
 - Governors have a good understanding of how well the children achieve in relation to those in other nursery schools, and are helped in this respect by their involvement in the federation with a nearby nursery school.
 - Governors are ready to ask searching questions and to hold the school to account, particularly when it comes to managing the budget to benefit the children. For example, they have a good awareness of the quality of teaching, and understand the importance of paying the right price to secure the best teaching, as they understand the link between teachers' pay and the progress made by children. This ensures good value for money.
 - Governors are very well trained and knowledgeable about safeguarding issues and safe recruitment. They effectively carry out their statutory obligation to keep the children safe and to ensure equality of opportunity for all.

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	101105
Local authority	Westminster
Inspection number	430844

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	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fiona McCarthy
Headteacher	Sanchia Lyon
Date of previous school inspection	14 July 2011
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