

# Portman Early Childhood Centre

12–18 Salisbury Street, London, NW8 8DE

**Inspection dates** 16–17 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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.

- Leadership is outstanding. School leaders are highly committed to the vision of working together with other professionals to ensure children and their families are very well supported.
- Children make outstanding progress during their time at Portman, especially in their speech and language development. This is because they are viewed as unique individuals and the learning planned is of a high quality.
- Staff have a strong understanding of how young children learn. They continually reflect on how well children are doing, their interests and what activities would best enable them to make the best progress they can.
- Teaching is managed extremely well. As well as regular checks by school leaders, teachers and support staff work together on developing their skills to make sure that the highest standards of teaching are maintained.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs and those at the early stages of learning English, make excellent progress.
- Teaching is outstanding because adults are highly effective in using their assessment of learning to plan the next steps for each individual child.
- Children's behaviour is outstanding and they learn to play well together, forming friendships and helping one another. They settle in quickly into nursery because of the caring and safe environment and the trusting relationships they have with staff.
- Parents and carers are highly positive of the school. They say they are very well informed about the progress their children are making and that staff make them feel an integral part to supporting their children's learning.
- Leaders, managers and governors have a strong impact on the quality of teaching and the achievement of children, sustaining the improvements achieved at the previous inspection.
- The governing body is highly supportive and is totally committed to make a difference to children and their families' lives. They promote the work of the school through the sharing of high-quality early years practice more widely.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 sessions in all areas of the school. In addition the inspector visited the centre's 'drop-in' session and breakfast club. A range of work and the adults' written observations in the children's 'learning journeys' were also scrutinised.
- Discussions were held with members of the senior leadership team, senior teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online survey. The inspector spoke with parents and carers at the beginning and end of sessions.
- The inspector looked at documentation such as policies, including those relating to safeguarding, the school's monitoring of teaching and learning and the development plan, planning by staff, 'co-family' review minutes, governing body minutes and logs relating to behaviour and absence. In addition, 21 responses from the staff questionnaire were also taken into account.

## Inspection team

Mirella Lombardo, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Portman Early Childhood Centre is an average-sized nursery school.
- The school provides a wide range of services to families in the local community, including day care throughout the year and a breakfast club and 'drop-in' sessions for children below the age of three. The governing body also manages the Portman Children's Centre, which did not form part of this inspection.
- The school offers all children four part-time sessions and one full-day session when they start in the nursery. In their final term at the school, the children are offered two full-day sessions.
- The majority of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds; most are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The main language spoken is Arabic.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs supported through early action is high. The proportion supported at early action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high.
- The school does not use alternative provision to support any of its children, and is not eligible to receive pupil premium or sports funding.
- The school is the main centre for the North East Locality Children's Centres and regularly provides training for both the maintained and private, voluntary and independent early years settings.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the use adults make of modern technology as a learning tool and provide more opportunities for children to use it to support their own learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children join the nursery with skills that are below the levels expected for their age, especially in their communication and language skills. As a result of high-quality teaching, a well-planned learning environment and strong partnerships with parents and carers, they make outstanding progress and leave the school with skills above the levels expected for their age.
- The school is highly successful in developing children's speech and language skills, working closely with speech and language therapists when children first start school, so that most of them no longer need the involvement of these experts by the time they leave the nursery.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through early action make rapid progress. This is because the school carefully identifies what they need and works exceptionally well with other professionals to make sure children and their parents and carers get all the support that is available to them.
- Children who speak English as an additional language, including those at the early stages of learning English, make outstanding progress. This is because of the strong focus placed on developing language in the nursery. The children's home language is strongly promoted through dual speaking staff and through activities such as 'Arab storytelling' sessions.
- Early reading and writing skills are developed exceptionally well because there are many opportunities for children to practise these skills. For example a group of children worked with a teacher on describing the pictures they had drawn and a strong emphasis was placed on the print conveying meaning and reading their descriptions. As a result most children who enter the nursery with simple mark making skills leave the school being able to form letters and write words.
- More-able children also make outstanding progress because their needs are carefully met. For example, they listen to stories at the end of the session together in a group so that adults can ask them more challenging questions. Adults provide direct individual support to extend their thinking as observed in a mathematics activity, where one child shared her cake with 10 bears, deciding that two bears could share a slice so that she could have more cake.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because staff are highly effective in checking daily how well children are doing and knowing each individual child's interests so that they can accurately plan what they need to do next in their learning.
- Systems for recording children's progress are very strong and children are encouraged to look at their 'learning journeys'. For example, at the end of the first day of the inspection, a teacher spoke about one child who had been very excited about a wooden puppet he had made that day and strategies to engage him further and develop his excitement were discussed with other staff. The next day, the child, unprompted, looked in his 'learning journey' and told the inspector he was looking for 'Mr Sparkey'. He was so excited to find a picture of the wooden puppet he had made the day before and was able to describe his features, including his red wiry hair, with great enthusiasm.
- Regular meetings are held with families and their child's 'co-family worker', a term used by Portman to emphasise the family role in a child's learning, rather than the more commonly used 'key worker' term. These meetings not only inform parents and carers of the progress their child is making but are also used to find out what the child is doing at home. Parents and carers told the inspector that these meetings were very useful and told them a lot about their child. One parent or carer said, 'I feel very involved; it is very important.'
- Adults are fully involved in playing with the children to develop their use of language. For example, in one session outdoors, children gave the 'robot' instructions on how to slide down the pole on the climbing frame and continually refined their language, having great fun when they

realised their instructions were not clear enough.

- Disabled children and those with special educational needs, in particular those with autistic spectrum disorders, are given clear routines to help them do things without help. They develop high levels of communication and learn to play with others well. Staff have developed their own approach to teaching these children based on the forming of trusting relationships to improve their self-esteem and the use of 'treasure boxes' as a focus for children to share their interests with adults.
- Children access both the indoor and outdoor learning areas freely and there are many activities provided to help them make decisions and pursue their interests. -For example, in one activity, children chose from a range of materials, including wood, to make objects. Under close supervision, they used vices to hold the wood while sawing and used glue guns to build their objects.
- Adults make good use of new technology in recording children's learning. However, they do not use it so well to enhance their teaching or promote pupils' learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- The behaviour of children is outstanding because staff make it clear how they expect children to behave and how to deal with behaviour that makes them unhappy. One child said, 'If someone hurts me I say stop, I don't like it!'
- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding. Children spoke confidently about how to keep safe in the nursery when playing on the climbing frame outdoors and when cutting wood with the saw. They could also talk about keeping safe outside the nursery by holding hands with an adult and putting on their seatbelts when they are in the school's minibus.
- Behaviour is managed extremely well and as a result no child has been asked to stay away from the school because of poor behaviour. One parent or carer spoke to the inspector about the improvements she had seen in her child's behaviour since joining the nursery. She said, 'My child had been excluded by two nurseries before coming here; they could not cope with him, but here his behaviour has improved so much.'
- Children enjoy coming to school, many running in to greet the adults as they arrive. They also are pleased to see each other. For example, one child greeted his friend on arrival by putting his arm around him and saying, 'Hello, how are you today?' The calm and inviting atmosphere of the nursery helps children to settle in well.
- Children develop strong friendships between each other and the adults around them. They play well together, share and take turns. At lunchtime they are encouraged to find their place at the table by looking for their picture on a placemat. As they sit together and wait to be served, they display good manners and strong social skills.
- The school encourages regular attendance and provides a breakfast club and a 'drop-in' session for siblings to support regular attendance. Many families are placed in temporary or emergency accommodation and the school helps these families to attend by sometimes collecting children and giving families the opportunities for children to stay all day.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- Outstanding leadership and management at all levels have ensured the school has sustained its outstanding practice and high levels of achievement since the previous inspection. Senior leaders are passionate about the learning that can be achieved through nursery education and all staff regularly reflect on how they are doing and how they can continue to improve.
- Senior leaders have been highly effective in creating a culture of high expectations and trusting relationships and this has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and behaviour in the school.
- The school is a highly inclusive place and equality of opportunity is of paramount importance to

senior leaders, governors and staff. Leaders are passionate about ensuring all children are included in the life of the school as many children who attend the nursery have complex needs, including autistic spectrum disorders.

- Parents and carers are highly positive about the school. They receive clear guidance on how they can support their children, including booklets produced by the school, for example, 'Maths is everywhere'. They are given many opportunities to share experiences with their children such as making 'treasure boxes' with them and fathers are invited to take their children swimming with staff.
- The curriculum provides children with many exciting opportunities to learn about the world, including visits to the seaside and the Natural History and Science Museums in London. Every child is given the opportunity to experience camping during their time at the school. The annual event is eagerly anticipated and creates great excitement among the children.
- Leadership of teaching is strong. School leaders and senior leaders regularly carry out checks of the teaching and learning. In addition the school has also developed opportunities for staff to work together and check their own teaching. Staff are highly supportive of the school and its work. They say they are given many opportunities to develop their skills even further and develop a 'Portman approach' in response to training they have received.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed extremely well, for example, through international events, visitors to the school and the inclusion of a range of pets in the nursery to foster caring and discussions about life and death.
- The school is the main centre for all children's centres in the area, providing them with advice and expertise. The school also provides placements for international students. It has strong working relationships with a wide range of professionals and provides a range of services for families, including a crèche so that parents and carers can attend events held through its work as a children's centre.
- The local authority offers light-touch support to the school. It has given the school opportunities to run training for local schools including working with newly qualified teachers and as the hub for all children centres in the area.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have an exceptionally strong vision about the role of the school in the community and a commitment to working with families. They bring to their role a wide range of experience in areas such as education, fund raising and journalism. They receive regular reports from the headteacher on the school's performance and make sure they are well informed about the future financial stability of the school. Governors have used performance management of the headteacher effectively to sustain the improvements since the last inspection. They have supported leaders in ensuring that teaching is of the highest quality and that there is no underperformance. They have a range of policies that make it clear how the work of the staff is recognised. They value the views of their staff in how the school can continue to provide outstanding provision. They are committed to the important role their school plays in the community and the support it provides for the children and their families. They are fully supportive of the school supporting other settings in the area and sharing its expertise. They are well informed about the quality of teaching through their regular visits to the school and often accompany staff on trips with the children. They make sure they are well trained and make use of the local authority programme for governors. Governors make sure that safeguarding requirements are thoroughly met.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	132151
<b>Local authority</b>	Westminster
<b>Inspection number</b>	430845

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	63
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Pollock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jo White
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28–29 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7641 5436
<b>Fax number</b>	020 7641 5427
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