

# Comet Nursery School and Children's Centre

20 Halcomb Street, Hoxton, London, N1 5RF

**Inspection dates** 04–05 February 2015

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher has maintained a relentless effort on having high expectations of staff and high quality provision to ensure that children get the best possible start to school.
- The school provides a warm welcome to children and families. Strong relationships between children, staff and parents enable children to settle into learning quickly.
- Achievement is outstanding. Children's knowledge of letters and sounds and numbers has been strengthened since the last inspection. All groups of children make rapid gains in their learning and development across all areas of learning. This is because staff use what they know about children to carefully plan for individual needs.
- Parents are full of praise for the school. They say that their child is known as an individual, is happy and safe and staff 'go the extra mile'.
- Teaching is outstanding. Staff are exceptionally skilled at noticing when to move children on and which strategies and resources to use. There is a sharp focus on developing children's ability to do things for themselves, develop interests and explore their environment.
- Children whose first language is not English make rapid progress because staff are highly skilled at providing activities and support that enable children to develop their vocabulary quickly.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs also achieve well because the school works well with families and external agencies to keep a close check on their needs and progress.
- Behaviour is exemplary. Children learn well together and demonstrate impressive social skills.
- Governors have a clear vision of excellence, which is underpinned in practice by the expertise they bring. They are extremely knowledgeable about the work of the school and work in close partnership with their headteacher. They make regular visits to the school and meet with staff and parents.
- As a result the school has continued to improve since the last inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- One additional inspector spent two days observing sessions indoors and outdoors. All or part of each session was observed jointly either with the headteacher or a member of staff. The inspector observed interactions between adults and children, talked to children about their learning and looked at information in children's learning records, known in the school as 'special books'.
- Children were observed learning about the sounds that letters make (phonics).
- The inspector looked at policies and documentation relating to keeping children safe, behaviour and attendance, the progress children make and how this is reported to parents. In addition the inspector looked at the school development plan and the work of governors.
- Discussions were held with parents, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority. The inspector also attended a parent meeting.
- The inspector took account of 10 responses to the online Parent View survey as well as the school's own feedback from parents. The inspector also took account of 21 responses from staff.

## Inspection team

Narinder (Nina) Dohel, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Comet Nursery School is a smaller than average-sized school.
- It is a school with a children's centre attached that provides for children from birth to five years and their families. There is also a new separate provision for two year olds. The headteacher and governors also manage these.
- There are 87 children on roll in the school, 34 of whom attend full time.
- Approximately 20% of children are of White British background. The remainder are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The number of children whose first language is not English is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs is also above average. The greatest levels of need are in speech and language development and autism. The proportion of children with a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- No children are entitled to the pupil premium (funding provided to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after) because of their age. However, approximately half of children are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school works closely within a partnership of local schools. Recently the headteacher has provided support to Whitmore Primary School, De Beauvoir Primary School and Hoxton Garden Primary School in the development of early years provision.

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

- Put into action plans for supporting parents more in helping their children with learning at home.
- Share the school's effective practice of meeting children's needs by contributing further to school improvement locally and nationally.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher demonstrates high standards and ambition for the children and staff at Comet Nursery School. Her experienced and determined leadership means that improvement and innovation never stops. The high standards seen at the last inspection have been strengthened particularly in deepening children's knowledge and use of phonics and number. As a result teaching and achievement are outstanding.
- School improvement plans are clear and concise. Key priorities are accurately identified and there is a great deal of evidence of how priorities have been and are being achieved. Planning documents and children's learning records show how the school's actions are resulting in children making rapid gains in their learning.
- There are clear and robust systems in place for checking on and developing teachers' performance and identifying professional development needs. Strengths in teaching are recognised and shared so that all those who work in the Nursery benefit from each other's skills and expertise. As a result teaching and achievement remain outstanding.
- Equality and fairness underpin the work of the school. All children have their needs considered and planned for effectively. No discrimination is tolerated. There are clear policies that guide staff about the school's commitment to equality and the rights of children.
- The curriculum is appropriate, stimulating and well resourced. Children learn about the wider world through resources and activities. These include books in different languages, dolls and home corner materials that reflect different cultures, trips and celebrations. Children learn to look after themselves and others through, for example, studying insects in the outdoors, bird watching and watching chicks hatch. They have opportunities to learn dance and perform to an audience. Consequently, children's social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is developed well.
- Parents value the support and opportunities they receive through the school. There are events for parents that guide them through getting their child into school and moving on into primary school. Families are encouraged to visit and 'stay and play' with their child before joining the school. Vulnerable children are offered additional support when moving from one school to another. A number of parents have expressed a need for ideas about how to help their child's learning at home. The school has a plan and is about to launch a programme of activities to support this.
- The school has strong relationship with the local authority. The local authority uses the school as a centre of excellence for other local schools and recognises the excellent practice for special educational needs. In turn the school values the challenge and experience it is offered by the local authority.
- The school works in close and effective partnerships with a local group of schools that includes a special school and a secondary school. There are well-developed links with a range of organisations to support families in improving aspects such as attendance, health and housing.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The work of governors is exemplary. The governors are extremely knowledgeable about the needs of children in the early years and what excellent practice looks like. They bring a wealth of understanding and experience to their role as well as invaluable skills. They seek training across a wide range of areas and undertake checks on their own work. They make regular visits to the school and provide insightful and practical recommendations. They work in close partnership with the headteacher to set an ambitious vision and high standards for the school. They seek advice when setting objectives for the headteacher and are well informed about the quality of teaching and how the performance of staff is checked. There are policies in place that explain how performance is rewarded and any underperformance addressed. They are ready to provide support to aid improvement or to challenge any aspects of practice that do not meet the high expectations of the school. Safeguarding requirements are securely met.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is outstanding.
- Children thoroughly enjoy being in school and seek out their favourite friends, spaces and activities.
- There are clear routines which help children to settle into their chosen activity quickly.

- Children get along well together. Any disputes are usually about sharing. These are sometimes resolved by another child nearby or by adults modelling and explaining appropriate behaviour, for example why it is important to take turns.
- The importance of good attendance is highlighted at every opportunity and the school employs a range of strategies to help children and families to attend. There are some good examples of individual cases where the school's strategies have directly helped improve attendance.
- There have been no exclusions.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding.
- Children show a curiosity and independence and are encouraged to take risks in developing their physical, social and emotional confidence.
- Children demonstrate a good understanding about how to stay safe. They put things away, handle scissors and woodwork tools well and alert others to dangers, such as a moving swing.
- During snack time, lunchtime, breakfast and tea club children demonstrate that they are aware of hygiene rules, such as washing hands before eating, using clean cutlery and an awareness of making room for one another at the table.
- Trips and visits, such as a boat ride on the nearby canal, also provide children with opportunities to learn about dangers beyond the school.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because staff have an excellent understanding about how best to develop children's learning. As a result children make rapid gains in their learning and are well prepared for the start of primary school.
- All staff, including those who are new or temporary, demonstrate an expectation that children have entitlement to a high quality learning experience.
- Adults are always observing and checking on children's learning. They provide the right amount of support to develop ideas and thinking, such as how to make a secure enclosure for the Gruffalo or calculating how many more monkeys are needed to make six.
- There is a strong focus on developing children's skills in reading, writing and number right across the setting both indoors and outdoors. Often, practising these skills is combined through one activity, such as counting one more and one less through stories and rhymes.
- Adults plan and extend activities that encourage children to develop their thinking and explanations. They anticipate where children might need support and where adults might need to place themselves to best provide this. They record the significant steps that children have taken in the children's learning records, known as special books.
- At the end of each day staff meet to discuss the learning that has taken place that day and how this can be developed the next day. For example, to develop the children's interest in weather and changes in materials, it was agreed a tray table full of ice was to be set up in the outdoor area. Children exclaimed at the textures and temperatures and discussed why the ice might be melting.
- Parents are very happy with the learning opportunities their children receive, particularly the learning outdoors. They say they would like the school to provide them with ideas about how they can further develop learning at home.
- Children who are disabled and those with special educational needs are sensitively supported. Individual needs are planned for; quiet spaces are created including in the outdoor area. A designated sensory room provides gentle stimulation and quiet space indoors.

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children join the Nursery demonstrating skills below those expected for their age across all areas of learning. A few children are at very early stages in their speech and language development.
- During their time in the Nursery, the vast majority of children make rapid progress across all areas of learning. This is because teaching is outstanding. Staff work closely with parents to gather information

through home visits and discussions. They use this information to carefully plan a learning environment that meets the needs and interests of children. As a result, most children leave the Nursery at levels expected or above those expected for their age.

- Children make excellent progress in developing their language, communication and reading skills rapidly. They get to know and retell stories such as *The Three Little Pigs* and *The Gingerbread Boy*. Children have puppets and models to help them do this. Some children recognise words and sentences and are helped to read sections of a story. Children demonstrate confidence in using their books, such as turning the pages and finding a favourite page. They show a developed understanding of sequence and story.
- Reading and listening skills are also developed through the teaching of letters and the sounds they make. Children play games such as retrieving an object from a bag and making the sound of the initial letter. Letters and sounds are reinforced across the day and across all areas of learning.
- There are many opportunities for children to develop their writing. One group of children wrote and read back their shopping list, others use a range of writing, drawing and painting tools to practise mark making. All children are encouraged to recognise, read and write their own name, which they respond to well.
- Children also make exceptionally good progress in the number and counting skills. Every opportunity is taken to extend children's knowledge of the numbers they know, recognise and can count in exciting ways. In the outdoor area children went digging for treasure in the sandpit. On finding this they were asked to match the picture to a number.
- Disabled children and children with special educational needs make as much progress as their peers. In areas where starting points are lower than their peers, such as in communication and language, they are helped to catch up. This is because need is identified early and specialist support provided, information sharing with parents is effective, staff are skilled at making learning accessible and there is close tracking and monitoring of children's successes and difficulties.
- Children whose first language is not English make as much, if not better, progress than their peers. They are helped specifically by a highly skilled practitioner. Appropriate strategies and resources are used highly effectively to develop the different levels of their language, often through stories.
- Children known to be eligible for free school meals make rapid progress from lower starting points than those of other groups of children. By the time they leave the Nursery the gap between these children and their peers is closed.
- A wide selection of books including books in different languages, sizes of text and range of genres are well used and taken home by children. Parents say they would like to see a wider range of ideas and activities so that they can help more with their children's learning at home.

## 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>	100213
<b>Local authority</b>	Hackney
<b>Inspection number</b>	448075

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>	3–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	87
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Fran Paffard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lisa Clarke
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21–22 March 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	02077499850
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