

Acacia Nursery and Children's Centre

Cecil Road, London, E11 3HF

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Require improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Early years provision		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Senior leaders and governors have not taken rigorous action to stem the decline in the school's effectiveness since the previous inspection. They do not have an accurate picture of children's achievements or the quality of teaching to plan for significant improvement.
- The school is in a period of instability, with some staff, including the interim headteacher, employed to work on a temporary and part-time basis. There is no indication when this situation may be resolved.
- Governors have not ensured that the Early Years statutory requirements are met with regard to the educational programmes for children of this age, or the provision of 15 hours free education.
- Some leaders, including those with responsibility for children with special educational needs, do not have the experience to take the school forward robustly. Actions taken have not had sufficient impact on improving teaching or achievement.
- Children, including those with special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language, underachieve because their individual needs are not met.
- Teaching is inadequate. Staff lack the knowledge to plan for and promote effective learning. Checks on children's achievements are not used to plan the next steps in their learning or help them to achieve highly. Time in each session is not used well to help children make the best possible progress.
- Children's spoken language, reading, writing and mathematical skills are not developed well enough across a range of activities. There are few opportunities for children to learn and play in their own language.
- When working in small groups with an adult, children listen carefully. The behaviour of some boys who attend in the afternoon is not as good as it should be. Snack time is not used well enough to develop children's social skills.

The school has the following strengths

- The partnership with the children's centre enables staff to keep children safe.
- Staff care for the children and their relationships with them are good.
- Parents spoken to value the support and help they receive. They are pleased with the way their children grow in confidence.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed over five hours of different activities indoors and outdoors. The interim headteacher joined most of the observations with the inspector.
- Meetings were held with the interim headteacher, deputy headteacher, some early years practitioners and representatives of the governing body and the local authority. In addition, the inspector met with leaders responsible for safeguarding and for children with special educational needs.
- The inspector sought the views of parents when they brought their children to school, and took into account the views expressed in a letter to the inspector. There were only four responses to the online survey Parent View. The school has not surveyed parental views.
- School documentation was scrutinised. This included the school's self-evaluation summary, the school improvement plan, minutes from the governing body meetings, arrangements for safeguarding, and records of children's achievements and attendance.

Inspection team

Kath Beck, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Acacia Nursery is similar in size to other nurseries nationally. It can admit up to 120 children part-time. Currently 56 attend in the morning and 38 in the afternoon. Children attend either the morning or the afternoon session.
- The proportion of children who come from minority ethnic groups is higher than usually found. Families come from many different cultural backgrounds. Half of the children speak English as an additional language. Other than English, most children speak Urdu or Eastern European languages.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs is higher than in schools nationally. Their needs are wide ranging.
- A higher proportion of children starts and leaves the nursery at other than the usual times.
- Since the previous inspection there have been many changes, especially in staffing. The substantive headteacher left in the summer of 2014. In September 2014 the deputy headteacher took up her role and an interim headteacher was appointed on a temporary basis for two days a week. One member of staff took up her role in January 2015, also on a temporary basis.
- In addition to the nursery the governors have responsibility for Acacia Children's Centre and provision for two-year-olds. These are inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - working in partnership with the local authority to secure effective full-time leadership of the school and its long-term future
 - providing training for all those in senior leadership roles to enable them to take the school forward more robustly
 - ensuring that those who lead and work with disabled children and those with special educational needs have the skills and resources necessary for them to make good progress
 - developing an effective tracking system that gives an accurate picture of children's progress, and use the information to write a sharply focused development plan to raise children's achievement
 - ensuring all children receive their full entitlement to 15 hours free education
 - meeting the Early Years statutory requirements for children to participate in engaging experiences across all the areas of learning indoors and outdoors.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring staff by:
 - having a clear and consistent understanding of the most effective ways in which children of this age learn
 - providing engaging activities that help children to develop high standards of behaviour and good attitudes to learning and to help them to be creative, make decisions, solve problems and explore the world around them
 - making frequent checks to identify exactly what children know and can do and use the information to develop the next steps to speed up learning for all children, but especially the most able
 - making clear in all their planning what children are to gain from different activities
 - increasing their knowledge of how to support disabled children and those with special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language more effectively. Implement the decisions taken that give these children more effective support promptly
 - making full use of time throughout each session to extend children's learning
 - using snack time more effectively to help the development of children's social skills.

■ Raise children's achievements by:

- integrating reading, writing and mathematical skills into a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities
- developing children's spoken language so that they can communicate effectively
- offering activities that challenge the most able children to achieve in line with their potential
- providing more opportunities for those who speak English as an additional language to play and learn in their own language.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate because senior leaders and governors have not ensured that the school has sustained the good provision found at the time of the previous inspection. Weaknesses identified at that time have not been addressed.
- Checks on what children know and can do remain weak. Staff lack the knowledge needed to plan the next steps in children's learning effectively, and to challenge them to achieve highly. The activities children undertake do not cover all the required areas of learning, especially when they are playing outside.
- The school is in a period of uncertainty. The interim headteacher and some staff are temporary and it is unclear when this situation will be resolved. This makes it difficult for decisions to be made about the school's long-term development.
- Children's individual needs are not met. Staff do not provide sufficient resources to help disabled children and those with special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language to have an equal opportunity to succeed. Several staff speak the children's home languages but do not often use them effectively to allow children to play and learn as well as they could.
- Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.
- Children do not receive their full entitlement to three hours of free education because of poor use of time. They are not encouraged to arrive on time to start their learning at the very beginning of each session. Children are released back into the care of their parents too early; usually ten minutes before teaching sessions are complete. This means they are not prepared well enough for their future education or life in modern Britain.
- The interim headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor the quality of teaching regularly. They have not been afraid to tackle underperformance, resulting in changes of staff. Targets set for improvement, and recent training for others to enhance their skills, have not had the anticipated impact on their performance. Staff, including those responsible for special educational needs and those making decisions in the absence of the interim headteacher, have not undergone the training they require to enable them to take the school forward robustly.
- The information about children's achievements over time provided for senior leaders and governors lacks precision. This makes it difficult for them to judge accurately the school's effectiveness and plan for strategic decisions to raise achievement. They have identified aspects of the school's provision that require significant improvement, but action has not been fast or rigorous enough to improve children's learning. The decision to implement strategies through pictures to enhance the communication skills of disabled children, those with special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language was not implemented with sufficient urgency.
- Activities such as digging for worms, searching for snails and looking through magnifying glasses at melting ice promote children's wonder of the world. Their cultural development is enhanced through celebrations of different faiths and cultures, and this fosters good relationships. However there are not enough opportunities for the children to make decisions, to think critically or to develop their own ideas.
- The school has a strong partnership with the children's centre, which provides good support in helping to keep children safe. This ensures that statutory requirements for safeguarding are met.
- Staff develop positive relationships with parents, who are pleased that their children grow in confidence and are learning to recognise different letters and their sounds.
- Until recently the local authority has not offered sufficient challenge and support to the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have not been rigorous enough in carrying out their own checks on the performance of the school. They have been too reliant on the analysis of data and other information provided to them. This information does not provide them with an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Until recently they made few visits to check on the quality of teaching and whether children's needs are met. They do not consult with parents to seek their views.
 - Systems to improve the quality of teaching have not been rigorous enough. Recently, governors have been made aware of underperformance and how this has been tackled. They know that targets set need to be linked to children's achievement and that good teaching should be rewarded. Teaching staff are too new to have been assessed fully as part of this process.
 - Governors have not ensured that the Early Years statutory requirements are met. As a result children do not learn, develop or make progress well enough in all the required areas of learning. This is limiting opportunities for all children to achieve as well as they can before transferring to primary school.

- With low numbers of children taking up places in the nursery in the afternoon, and high staffing costs, finances are tracked carefully.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**require improvement****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of children requires improvement.
- Children's attitudes to learning are not as good as they were at the time of the previous inspection. This is because too many activities do not invite their interest, curiosity or challenge them to learn well. However, when working with adults in small groups, children enjoy the attention, listen carefully and participate in stories and games with enthusiasm.
- Staff teach children to behave well, show respect and be kind and considerate to one another. Children learn to take turns and to share resources. Staff mostly manage those with behavioural difficulties well. However, some children in the afternoon, especially boys, do not behave as well as they should because activities are not demanding enough for them. Staff do not always intervene quickly enough to prevent interruptions to the games other children are playing.
- No children have been stopped from attending the nursery because of bullying, name calling or other inappropriate behaviour.
- The school is a harmonious community. Children from different cultural backgrounds play together well. Some children who speak English as an additional language find it harder to join in because they are not encouraged sufficiently to play and learn in their own language.

Safety

- The school's work to keep children safe and secure requires improvement.
- Senior leaders work closely with the children's centre and other professionals to keep children safe.
- Children's attendance, especially that of vulnerable children, is monitored regularly. Attendance in the afternoon is much lower than in the morning. Too often children arrive late, and go home ten minutes early. This hinders their achievement and their preparation for school.
- Safeguarding policies and training for staff are updated regularly. Staff know that they have important responsibilities to report concerns of any kind immediately.
- Staff carry out regular checks to make sure that the accommodation is safe. These are not always formally recorded. Children are rightly encouraged to take risks when playing in the garden. However, some are not always sufficiently aware of the danger to others when, for example, riding their tricycles too fast.
- Parents spoken to have no concerns about the manner in which the staff keep their children safe,

The quality of teaching**is inadequate**

- Teaching is inadequate because not all staff have sufficient knowledge about the best ways in which children of this age learn. Staff rarely integrate the development of literacy and numeracy skills across a wide range of activities, hindering progress. Their interactions with children are not good enough to extend their learning.
- Too often the tasks children undertake do not spark their curiosity and interest. There are limited opportunities for them to be creative, make decisions, solve problems or to play and explore the world about them, especially when they are outside.
- Staff do not make frequent checks on what children know and can do. Consequently they do not have the information they need to plan activities to meet individual needs, and children lose interest. In addition, staff are unable to track how well children are progressing in preparation for the next stage in their education.
- Other than for small-group activities, staff do not plan or consider in depth what children are to achieve in tasks they undertake alone or outside.
- Support for disabled children and those who have special educational needs is weak. Staff do not have the resources or skills to enable these children to make good progress. Staff take turns each day to be responsible for caring for the needs of these children, which means not all children receive appropriate support. Decisions such as those to help children make better progress in communicating effectively are not implemented promptly.

- Some staff speak Urdu, Punjabi and East European languages. They do not use these skills often enough to play alongside the children and enable them to play, learn and make progress in their own language. Resources to assist children who start school speaking other languages, and have no English, are limited.
- Time is not used well to promote learning throughout each session. Parents who arrive late with their children interrupt adults who are working with other children to resolve their questions. Current arrangements for snack time reduce the impetus in learning and do little to enhance children's social skills.
- Relationships between the staff and the children are good.
- Small-group sessions are successful in helping children to learn the sounds letters make and count in sequence, and they delight in listening to their favourite stories.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Children's achievements are inadequate because activities do not meet their specific needs. Staff lack the expertise to give good support to children with special educational needs or those who speak English as an additional language.
- The school does not have an effective system to track children's progress frequently enough while they are in the school. Until very recently, children's achievements have only been checked when they start and when they leave the school. The analysis of this information lacks rigour. It does not present a convincing picture of children's achievements in each of the areas of learning from the time they started to when they left. This means senior leaders are unable to identify key areas for development.
- In their conversations with children, staff ask pertinent questions but are too ready to accept one-word answers. They do not show children often enough how they can answer in a short sentence to give them the skills to express their ideas confidently.
- Games that help children to recognise and write different letters give them a positive start in reading and writing. However, these skills are seldom integrated into other activities that children participate in at other times. This is also the case in mathematics, where not all staff include mathematical vocabulary or counting skills in children's play.
- The lack of opportunities for children to solve problems, think critically and use their imagination holds back their ability to work on their own, 'have a go', make decisions or develop new ways of doing things.
- Children are rarely involved in activities that develop their skills through role play, art, and play with a wide range of media and materials. This, too, limits the chance for them to share their thoughts and ideas.
- Activities such as playing with melting ice and finding out what happens enable children to find out about the world around them. However, they do not have the opportunity to visit their community to find out more about people and places. Playing in the sand, riding tricycles, and running up and down the hill contribute well to children's physical development.
- The most able children do not make the progress of which they are capable. Activities do not offer them the level of challenge they require.

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	103030
Local authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	449461

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lubna Hussain
Headteacher	Zoe Sharman (interim)
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 March 2012
Telephone number	020 8558 4444
Fax number	None
Email address	office@acacia.waltham.sch.uk

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