

Dorothy Gardner Centre

293 Shirland Road, 293 Shirland Rd, London W9 3JY

Inspection dates

10–11 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In recent times, the school has undergone a period of turbulence, including three changes of headteacher during the past year. This has had a negative impact on the direction and pace of improvement.
- Governors have not acted swiftly enough to secure improvement. Improvement priorities which were identified during the 2014 inspection still require action.
- Leaders collect a considerable amount of information for tracking and monitoring children’s progress. The systems they use are unwieldy and the information is not always accurate.
- Teachers do not plan explicitly and systematically for the development of literacy and numeracy skills. This hampers children’s progress in these areas.
- Adults regularly observe children learning, but their records sometimes describe what is happening rather than what is being learned. This means that information to plan for next steps is not always reliable.
- Adults do not uphold consistent standards of behaviour. As a result, children sometimes ignore what they are being asked to do or respond differently to different adults working with them.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly appointed executive headteacher is ambitious for the children at the school. He has provided a renewed sense of direction and motivated staff, governors and parents and carers. This is now having a positive impact on the pace of improvement.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding.
- Adults are kind and caring. This makes the school a warm and friendly place to be.
- Children are safe and secure. They are happy and enjoy coming to school. Children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those with medical needs are well provided for.
- Leaders provide a broad curriculum. There is a strong emphasis on children’s personal and social development. British values are well promoted.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - planning explicitly and systematically for the development of literacy and numeracy skills to meet the needs of all children
 - developing teachers' skills in making observations of learning
 - ensuring that expectations for behaviour are consistently reinforced.
- Improve the quality of information about children's progress and their outcomes by ensuring that systems are precise and manageable and that they provide leaders with timely, accurate and relevant information.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have been too slow to improve the quality of provision in literacy and numeracy as identified in the previous two inspections. The lack of any urgent action in these areas, together with changes of leadership, has had a negative impact on the direction and pace of improvement.
- The curriculum is not well balanced because it does not include enough explicit planning for reading, writing and mathematics. These areas are not central to the school's approach.
- Leaders use a very unwieldy system for tracking and monitoring children's progress. It is not helping them to plan effectively for individuals or for groups. They gather plenty of information, but it is not always reliable. This is because, while some observations of learning are detailed and informative, others, though equally detailed, describe what is happening rather than what is being learned.
- The newly appointed executive headteacher is determined to improve this situation. In a short space of time, he has made changes which have had a positive impact on the quality of the learning environment and on the culture of safeguarding. His vision is wholeheartedly shared by staff and governors alike. Staff are proud to work here and feel valued.
- Leaders provide a broad curriculum which covers all areas of learning within the early years foundation stage. British values underpin and enrich the curriculum, forming the basis for how children are expected to behave.
- Leaders make sure that children have happy memories of school. Recent visits to local parks to gather conkers enhanced children's learning in many ways, including social, creative and physical. Inclusive and family-friendly visits to places of social, cultural and historical interest in London and the seaside add further educational value. Through celebrations of different religious and cultural festivals, leaders help children to value people of all faiths and none.
- Leaders make use of the early years pupil premium to enhance the educational experiences of eligible children further. Children enjoy yoga, learning outdoors and regular visits to places of interest. Leaders do not currently report the impact of these additional investments but are aware of the need to do so.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not paid sufficient attention to the improvements needed. Until recently, their level of challenge to leaders has not been sharp enough. Governors have not held leaders to account for the investment of the early years pupil premium.
- Governors are committed to improving the school and are seeking support to help them with this task. They consider the appointment of the new executive headteacher as an important first step on this journey.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have further strengthened policies and procedures so that they are explicit and reflective of the best practice. Leaders have instilled a strong culture of safeguarding. Information about who to go to if staff have concerns is visible and accessible across the school. Partnerships with other agencies such as the local authority stakeholders are managed effectively to ensure that children who are vulnerable are kept safe from harm.
- The school is a safe place for children to play and learn. Risk assessments and incident logs are appropriately completed. Staff know and understand the importance of constant vigilance. Training is relevant, regular and current.
- Governors fulfil their responsibilities appropriately. They are well trained in and knowledgeable about their safeguarding duties. They make sure that staff recruitment is safely managed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is inconsistent. This is particularly the case in literacy and numeracy. Teachers' planning does not place as much emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills as it does on skills in other areas.
- Where teaching is stronger, this promotes good learning in speaking and listening. For example, in the mud kitchen, children spoke with confidence about their 'cooking'. With adult help, the children referred to 'lists' of ingredients to check what they still needed to add. They extended their vocabulary and practised good conversation. Other activities do not provide children with the same opportunities. In these instances, vocabulary development is limited, because adults repeat simple words and phrases rather than encouraging conversation and using new words of interest.
- Children develop mathematical skills, although these are sometimes overlooked because they are incidental to the main activity. Typically, staff lack the required skills to develop children's mathematical knowledge using the resources available.
- Children develop physical and creative skills, and adults teach these skills with confidence. Inspectors observed children climbing and balancing on large apparatus and, with adult encouragement and support, going further and trying harder. Children mixed paints, learning the names of new colours and improving their dexterity through practising simple brush techniques.
- Regular story times help children to build up a repertoire of well-known tales. These have the potential to enhance children's language development. In practice, this varies. Better story times are typified by adults sticking to clear expectations for children paying attention and using visual aids such as puppets. In these sessions, children become familiar with a new story and enjoy a calm and memorable time. In weaker sessions, some children do not adhere to the rules and lose concentration. In such sessions, the experience does not enhance their learning.
- In general, adults make sure that children abide by simple rules such as remembering

their manners and taking turns. However, these rules are not consistently applied, and this leads to deterioration in behaviour.

- Leaders and other adults supporting the youngest children and those who have SEN and/or disabilities do so with care and vigilance. The very youngest and those new to the school settle in well and quickly become used to the rhythm and routines of the day. Children who have SEN and/or disabilities make progress from their starting points, because of the care and attention given to identifying their individual needs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is good. This is a kind and caring school where children are happy. Parents are pleased with the school and they appreciate the care and support their children receive.
- Children enjoy sociable and friendly snack times, choosing healthy fruit and learning to tidy away after themselves. Lunchtimes are similarly sociable, providing nutritious and varied meals served family style.
- Children who have SEN and/or disabilities and those with medical needs are well cared for. All staff are aware of them and ensure that children with additional needs are kept safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is good. Children enjoy the many interesting activities and are learning how to play together and share equipment fairly. Occasionally, children misbehave. This is due to mixed messages being given by adults about good conduct and good manners.
- While attendance is non-statutory for children registered at the school, leaders take it very seriously. They work hard to develop good attendance habits, contacting parents if their child does not attend and reinforcing messages about good attendance leading to good learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The outcomes for children require improvement. In 2018, records for children leaving the nursery show that most achieved age-related expectations. Records for new children entering the nursery this year show that around one third are at age-related expectations, including those eligible for the early years pupil premium.
- Portfolios of children's work are detailed but they do not always provide information about what has been learned. This means that information to inform children's next steps is not precise enough. Information about learning in literacy and numeracy is not gathered as frequently as that for other areas of learning.

School details

Unique reference number	101105
Local authority	Westminster
Inspection number	10055200

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	2 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Foyle
Executive Headteacher	Novak Ivanovic
Telephone number	020 8969 5835
Website	www.dorothygardner.co.uk
Email address	office@dorothygardner.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2018

Information about this school

- Dorothy Gardner is a smaller than average-sized nursery school. It is part of the Queen’s Park Early Years Federation, which includes Mary Paterson Nursery School and Queen’s Park Children’s Centre.
- There is an executive headteacher and a single governing body for the two schools, with a separate management committee for the children’s centre overseen by the local authority.
- The school operates a fully integrated day, with two-, three- and four-year olds including those who have SEN and/or disabilities mainly sharing the same learning space.
- There is extended day and/or full day-care provision for children who have SEN and/or disabilities and children of working parents.
- The proportion of children who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of children from minority ethnic groups is well above average.

- The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is well above average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all age groups. During the first day of the inspection, these observations were made jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed children learning in the classroom and outdoors, at snack time, lunchtime and when being collected by their parents and carers.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at children's work, including from the previous year. They observed children at story time and as they went about their learning.
- Inspectors met with leaders and scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those about the school's self-evaluation and improvement priorities.
- Inspectors took account of the five responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 17 responses to the staff survey. Inspectors also met a number of parents to seek their views about the school and how their children were doing.

Inspection team

Jane Moon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jude Wilson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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