

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HOLMEWOOD NURSERY SCHOOL**

**Brixton, London SW2**

LEA area: Lambeth

Unique reference number: 100554

Headteacher: Sue Donovan

Reporting inspector: Stephen Beaumont  
8440

Dates of inspection: 14th and 15<sup>th</sup> June 2000

Inspection number: 188823

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 5
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	66 Upper Tulse Hill, Brixton, London
Postcode:	SW2 2RW
Telephone number:	0208 674 2186
Fax number:	0208 674 8838
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Maureen Brown
Date of previous inspection:	21 <sup>st</sup> – 23 <sup>rd</sup> May 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	
Stephen Beaumont	Registered inspector
Jane O'Keefe	Lay inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Team inspector

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The Registrar  
Inspection Quality Division  
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Alexandra House  
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is a very large community nursery school with 126 places. Children enter the school soon after their third birthday. Most leave soon after their fourth birthday. The school serves a community with many different cultures and sees this as an advantage. 40 children come from families where English is an additional language and of these 36 are at an early stage of speaking English. 25 children have special educational needs and 25 children receive free school meals. These figures are much higher than the national averages. Families come from varied backgrounds, including many who live in high-rise flats or come from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds. Children's skills and knowledge are well below that expected of children of three when they enter the school, particularly in speaking and listening in English.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a very good school with some excellent features. Children make very good progress, through good teaching and rich learning experiences and are likely to reach the desired national learning outcomes when they are five. The school provides excellent opportunities for parents to develop their own skills and become fully involved in their children's learning. There is very good leadership and management and the school provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Ensures that children of all abilities make very good progress through good teaching and a wide range of carefully chosen activities.
- Develops children's social skills and gives them confidence to continue their learning.
- Provides excellent links with parents, which increase their own skills and encourages them to be fully involved in the education of their own children.
- Uses the whole school site and the local community to provide very high quality learning opportunities.

#### **What could be improved**

- Skills of writing, notably in boys. The school recognises this and it is included in the school development plan.

*The area for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. It is included in the current school development plan.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good progress and brought about several improvements since the last inspection. Although there were no key issues for action noted in the last inspection report, there have been considerable developments in assessment and recording of progress, the extension of resources and teaching of information technology and in setting up learning opportunities for parents. This is a very reflective school, which is constantly looking to improve standards, resources and the quality of teaching and learning.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about the achievements of pupils in relation to the desirable learning outcomes for children of five by the time they leave the school.

Performance in:		<b>Key</b>  well above average    A above average        B average                C below average        D well below average    E
language and literacy	C	
Mathematics	C	
personal and social development	B	
other areas of the curriculum	B	

Many children enter the school, soon after their third birthday, with skills and knowledge well below that expected for their age nationally. When they transfer to primary schools after three, four, or five terms, they are on course to achieve the desirable learning outcomes, and in some cases exceed them. Attainment in language and literacy is in line with national expectations. Children make very good progress in speaking and listening and overcome the early difficulties, which many have. All staff work hard to get children to speak and to build up their vocabulary. Children learn to handle books well and to get enjoyment from stories. They recognise that writing has meaning and learn the names and sounds of letters and to write their own names. Although writing is of an appropriate standard, boys' attainment is lower than girls, and this reflects the national picture.

There are particular strengths in that children gain very good personal and social skills, so that when they leave the school, they are confident and independent learners. Children have notably good physical skills and a very good knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They can set up simple experiments, consider results and have a very good knowledge of living things. They manipulate tools well to make their own devices and use paint, fabric and a wide range of materials to express themselves creatively to very good effect for their age. They respond well to music, dance, rhymes and stories.

Children of all abilities make very good progress. Higher attaining children can write accounts and stories in sentences and express themselves very imaginatively and can ask as well as answer questions. Children with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs also make very good progress and meet the targets that are set for them.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have very good attitudes. They are keen to come to school and generally eager to learn. They select tasks quickly and they stay at them for an appropriate time. Children enjoy their activities and learn with a smile. They are taught to collect their own materials and to tidy up after themselves. They do this very well and this helps them to become independent learners.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in classrooms and in outdoor areas is good. Behaviour at lunchtime in the hall is very good and this helps make it a very valuable social occasion. The school sets high standards for behaviour and children respond well to these expectations.
Personal development and relationships	Children relate very well to their teachers, other adults and to each other. They learn to share and take turns and recognise that they sometimes have to wait for attention. They grow in confidence and in curiosity. Boys and girls work and play very well together and there is excellent racial harmony.
Attendance	Attendance is very good and almost all children are punctual.

Children develop very well personally and socially, which has a very positive effect on their all round learning and this is a strength of the school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	
Lessons seen overall	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Of the 25 sessions inspected one was excellent, ten were very good, eleven were good and three were satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. The staff are experienced and work very well together as a team. Nursery nurses and other adults play a full part in planning, teaching and in evaluating the quality of learning.

Teachers' and other adults' knowledge of how young children learn is very good and 'Key Workers' have a very good knowledge of individual children. This system of assigning each child to the particular care of a named adult, under the direction of a teacher, for their whole time in the school, ensures that needs are clearly identified and progress carefully checked. Planning is very good. All adults use effective and varied teaching methods. This has a very positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning.

Generally adults use questioning well and demand that children respond in varied ways. "Tell me more", or "If you don't talk to me, I won't know what you need" being often heard. However, there were occasions when they asked questions and answered them for the children, or did not demand a sufficiently extended response from them in getting them to talk about what they were doing, or asking them to explain what they had done. All recognise that language is central to learning and work hard to get children to talk. Children are well managed, but a small number present challenging behaviour, which slows the pace of some group sessions.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad, covers all the national recommendations and is based on individual needs. It fully meets the needs of children of three and four years. Parents are kept very well informed of what is being taught throughout each term. Such activities as Yoga for children and their parents, extend the curriculum available. Learning opportunities are very carefully planned in the knowledge that children enter the school at an earlier age and leave, in some cases, after three terms. The high quality curriculum provision prepares children very well for Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum. The school is preparing very well to introduce the new curriculum in September 2000.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. All who work in the school are aware of the particular needs of individual children and work well together to meet them
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Nearly a third of the children speak English as an additional language. When they enter the school many are at the early stages of speaking English and of listening to it. A specialist teacher works with groups and all work with individuals to very good effect.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There are very good opportunities for personal development. The whole environment opens children's eyes to the wonder of the world and beauty within it. All adults give clear moral teaching, explain what is right and wrong and are careful to get children to see what the effects of their own actions are on others. Opportunities for social and cultural development are very good. Children learn to live with each other, in a multi-cultural society and to enjoy the music, art, dance and foods of different traditions in the school.



How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a very caring school in which children feel secure. There are very good procedures for dealing with accidents, illness and for child protection. Full records on each child are kept and used to good effect.
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The wide and well-planned curriculum, with very good provision for personal development has a very positive effect on standards and progress.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives very good leadership, based on an excellent knowledge of the needs of young children. She has a clear vision for the school and is very successful in getting individuals to operate as a team. The deputy gives very good support and is very effective in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning with the headteacher. Teachers give very effective leadership within their own teams. The school's administration officer brings particularly good management skills. She is often the first contact with parents and her financial and administrative work helps the school run smoothly.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very effective in giving a clear direction to the school, supporting staff and reviewing progress. They use their own business and other skills to very good effect in moving the school forward. They have an overriding aim of maintaining and improving the quality of education being given. Their major constraint is the present lack of clarity and a definite timetable for the proposed considerable change to become part of the 'Sure Start Programme', involving an extended day and school year for children from soon after birth to five.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is a very reflective school. Staff evaluate children's individual attainment and progress. There are good arrangements for monitoring of teaching. Staff are constantly looking to find better ways of doing things and improving standards.
The strategic use of resources	Governors ensure that all available grants are received and spent according to best value principles. Governors and staff apply for and gain additional grants for school improvements and for parental learning, which have been very well used. The school is very well resourced and the total space available is fully used in an excellent manner. Very good use is made of the local community with many visitors coming into the school and this increases the quality and richness of learning.

The leadership and management provided has a very positive effect on the quality of education given. Governors seek to ensure that best value is gained. The school gives very good value for money.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children like school.</li> <li>• They make good progress.</li> <li>• Good teaching.</li> <li>• Works closely with parents.</li> <li>• School well managed and lead.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant issues.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' views. Clearly the school is greatly appreciated and very well supported by parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **Ensures that children of all abilities make very good progress through good teaching and a wide range of carefully chosen activities.**

1. Many children enter the school with attainment lower than expected for their age, especially in language skills. Teachers provide a wide range of carefully planned activities and skilfully intervene and interact with children to extend learning. Teachers plan activities very well and use their very good understanding of how young children learn to create a very stimulating learning environment. Adults focus on groups of children and observe, assess and record their progress. These observations are discussed with team members at the end of each day and the following day's activities are reviewed.
2. These factors lead to very good progress being made by children of all abilities. The higher attaining children leave the school having already reached levels expected of children of five and often exceeding them. They can write simple sentences to recount a story or an event, count accurately to 20 and describe shapes. They speak very clearly, with interest and animated expression.
3. Children of average ability are likely to reach the expected levels by the time they are five. They can all write their own name, count and recognise numbers to 10 and can estimate well for their age. They have particularly well-developed knowledge and understanding of the world. They can use a computer skilfully, using a mouse and a floor robot very effectively. They can set up simple experiments and talk about their findings. They have a very good knowledge of living things. They have very well developed physical skills and can balance, swing, run, jump and control a ball very well for their age. In these activities their attainment is beyond what is expected for children of five. The excellent use of all available space and the setting up of exciting activities contribute greatly to children's quality of learning and very good progress.
4. Children of below average ability and those with special needs also make very good progress and reach the targets that are set for them, although they are not likely to reach the desired national standards at the age of five.

#### **Develops children's social skills and gives them confidence to continue their learning.**

5. Children's attainment in personal and social development exceeds the standards expected of them by the age of five. Children settle well and enjoy the experiences offered to them. They quickly adapt to the routines of the day, make friends with other children and show respect to adults. Children are encouraged to work independently and that is supported by, easily retrievable resources and a wide range of activities set out. They are confident in showing their preferences and in choosing activities independently. For example, in the outdoor area, children independently put their aprons on and play with the water, watching it go down the gutters into the tray. In another area, they choose tricycles, carts and other wheeled toys, ride confidently, sometimes carrying passengers. They stop, pay and get petrol at the petrol station and happily ride away, enjoying the role-play.
6. Children show interest in all the activities offered to them and learn to make choices. They work well in small and large groups, for example in story and singing times. They learn to take turns such as waiting for the computer. They get a number card and know their position in the queue and wait patiently for the others to finish. They recognise an egg timer counting the minutes. Children co-operate well, encouraged by good examples set by staff. Children lay the tables for lunch, counting the number of forks, spoons and knives needed on each table. They tidy up after the activities and put away resources in appropriate places.
7. The children show strong concern for living things as they observe snails and plants in the garden. Children of all ethnic backgrounds play happily together and are quick to say sorry if they hurt someone. Most children can concentrate and persevere to complete their activities, such as drawing portraits, writing stories and fitting together shapes on the carpet. Children show feelings such as wonder when they see the snails climb up and down the containers and curl up in their shell at the slightest danger. They enjoy their activities and take pleasure when they can do something new. For example, there were squeals of joy when a child saw his patterns on the computer screen, using the colour magic program. Children have many opportunities to learn about their own and others cultural and religious events, when they celebrate Christmas, Chinese New Year, Diwali and Eid. Children show good personal independence in using the toilet, dressing and undressing.

8. The very good personal and social development is because staff give a considerable amount of time and attention into developing children's confidence and independent learning skills. They ensure that any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with positively. They give clear explanations of what is wrong and encourage the child to think through how it could have behaved differently. Staff treat the children with a great deal of care and respect. The good relationships between staff and parents enable them to work together to nurture children's personal and social growth.

**Provides excellent links with parents. which increase their own skills and encourages them to be fully involved in the education of their own children.**

9. The school has excellent links with its parents. Staff work constantly to keep parents informed of their children's progress and ways in which they can help them at home. This has a very positive effect on children's attainment.
10. The provision the school makes for parents' own personal development is exceptional. The school keeper's house has recently been converted to a centre for parents, where courses and workshops are held to help parents. both with the upbringing of their own children and also in developing their own skills and job prospects. They often work alongside their own children in the centre. Staff from the school are supported by tutors from adult education and the Health Authority. Poets have also been involved and there have been visits to the Royal Festival Hall. Relationships between staff and parents are particularly friendly and supportive. This work, as part of the Family Learning Project and the Health Action Zone Initiative, has received national recognition.
11. There is an excellent library as part of the parents' area. This is very well stocked with very well chosen books, pictures and tapes and is well used by families. Parents are given good guidance on how to encourage their children to enjoy books and every opportunity to borrow materials of high quality.

**Uses the whole school site and the local community to provide very high quality learning opportunities.**

12. Every square centimetre of the school site is well planned and used to provide very good opportunities for learning. The playground has been made into an outdoor classroom of real excitement. Flowers and other living things abound and plants are very well tended, with the school often being finalists in the London School's Gardens Competitions. Grassed areas and 'secret gardens' add to make this a real oasis of adventure and exploration. The opportunities offered compensate to a large extent for the cramped conditions and lack of space in the homes of many local families. Above all, the teaching areas created in classrooms and outdoors reflect a real knowledge of how young children learn and present an exciting and stimulating series of activities, which demand that all children take an active part. Children are central to all that is provided and through these activities they extend their joy in learning and gain a fascination and curiosity for the world around them.
13. Recently the school has converted the empty school keeper's house into an excellent area in which parents and parents with their children can learn together. The house is very welcoming and even contains its own beautiful garden where children can play with imagination and in complete security. The school has been successful in gaining additional grants to complete the transformation of the house and it is being fully used throughout the day.
14. The school is a vital part of the community and it uses the immediate locality to extend opportunities for learning. Many visitors come into the school and they work directly with children, which extends learning and makes it a real experience. The inspired setting out of the site and the use made of all available resources are excellent and have a positive effect on the high quality of education, which is provided.

**WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**Skills of writing, notably in boys.**

15. Although all staff give good attention to the teaching of writing skills and attainment is in line with what is expected for children of this age, the attainment of boys is below that of girls. The school is aware of this and includes it as part of the school development plan. Staff have analysed learning targets and are looking at ways to increase opportunities for boys to use and develop their writing skills.

16. Most boys can write their own name. They are encouraged to do so by such devices as having to sign dockets for their purchases at the 'petrol station' and ordering goods from the 'café'. There is a good range of writing materials and book writing/drawing sessions are held regularly. Boys and girls also use computer programs to help with letter recognition and their writing of individual letters. Almost all children know that writing carries meaning and most make their own marks, or draw pictures to tell of their ideas, with many using the convention of recording this left to right.
17. Observations in particular sessions indicated that girls chose writing as an activity more readily than boys and remained on task for longer periods. They were more inclined to read from their own emergent writing and share it with others. Although this is also a national picture, the school should continue to give further encouragement/positive discrimination to boys in developing their writing.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

18. In order to improve standards further, staff should;
  - (1) Continue to provide rich experiences and encourage all children, but especially boys, to write as a part of purposeful play.
  - (2) Further develop writing activities through book making sessions and writing with children and encouraging them to hear the sounds of initial letters in words.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

25

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

8

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	40	44	12	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

Nursery

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	126
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	25

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

Nursery

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	25

#### English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	40
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#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

%

School data	Not available
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#### Unauthorised absence

%

School data	Not available
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### Teachers and classes

### Financial information

**Qualified teachers and support staff**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.3

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	236

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9.4
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Financial year	199-2000
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	£
Total income	410,679
Total expenditure	412,676
Expenditure per pupil	3276
Balance brought forward from previous year	5000
Balance carried forward to next year	3003

## *Results of the survey of parents and carers*

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	126
Number of questionnaires returned	68

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	88	12	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	74	25	0	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	70	30	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	0	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good.	82	16	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	66	25	6	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	78	21	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	25	4	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	74	22	3	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	87	12	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	78	19	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	0	0	0	0	0