

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **JAMES LEE NURSERY SCHOOL**

West Kensington

LEA area: Hammersmith and Fulham

Unique reference number: 100317

Acting headteacher: Marlene Slack

Reporting inspector: Lys Bradley  
19994

Dates of inspection: February 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> 2001

Inspection number: 194654

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 children:	3-5
Gender of children:	Mixed
School address:	Gliddon Road West Kensington London
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Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor Gerald Johnson
Date of previous inspection:	June 3 <sup>rd</sup> 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

James Lee is a 60-place nursery with 42 full-time and 35 part-time children. Since the last inspection, the school intake has become much younger due to changes in primary admissions. Children are now admitted as soon as they are three. The school is held in high regard by parents and is regularly oversubscribed. Children live in the immediate area in a variety of accommodation, which includes rented local authority flats, housing association flats, temporary B&B accommodation and privately owned flats and houses. They come from very diverse ethnic heritages and speak twenty languages between them; currently the most common are Arabic, French, Farsi and Serbo-Croat. Thirty-six per cent of children speak English as an additional language; the majority (22 per cent of the school population) are at an early stage of language acquisition. The proportion of children from ethnic minority backgrounds and those speaking English as an additional language is very high. The proportion of full-time children who are eligible for free school meals is just above average. There are two children presently on the school's register of special educational needs. Attainment on entry is broadly average, although it spans a wide range.

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

James Lee Nursery continues to be a very good school with very effective systems in place that have withstood changes in staff and circumstance, and provides very good value for money. The school provides a very secure environment where children become confident and independent young learners who go on to make a successful transition to primary school. High standards have been maintained over time and the school community continually strives to improve in order to do the best they possibly can for their children. The school provides very well for the intellectual, physical and emotional needs of its children and takes the utmost care to value each and every one. Teaching is consistently of a high standard and very good support is given to children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Curriculum development has kept abreast of national changes and demands; procedures for assessment are excellent and used very effectively to provide the right level of challenge and support for each individual, including those who learn at a faster pace. The personal, social and emotional area of learning is superbly developed and, as a consequence, children's behaviour is very good and their relationships excellent. All children make very good progress during their time at the school. The quality of leadership and management is very good, and is effective in all aspects of school life.

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

- Excellent planning and assessment enables the needs of each individual to be met and for children to make very good progress.
- The rich and relevant curriculum, including outstanding provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, enthuses the children and develops in them very good attitudes to learning.
- Meticulous and sensitive provision for children's personal, social and emotional development enables them to become confident, questioning and independent young learners.
- Very good leadership has built a committed, knowledgeable and highly effective team.

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

- Information and communication technology is not integrated fully into the curriculum.
- The governing body is not sufficiently involved in monitoring the work of the school.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

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

The school was last inspected in June 1997. Since that time the school has made very good progress. High standards have been maintained and key issues have been addressed thoroughly:

- Long-term plans are in place for each curriculum area. These have been reviewed and updated to enable staff to make systematic reference to the Early Learning Goals and to use them to identify learning objectives. Evaluation of teaching and children's learning is now far more specific and informs the next step in planning for further improvement. There is increased evidence of children reflecting and commenting on their own learning.

- An annual audited statement of the school voluntary fund account is submitted to the governing body.
- An attendance policy is in place. Staff are diligent about following up absence and the acting headteacher monitors all absence and lateness on a regular basis. Percentages are calculated on a half-termly basis and unacceptably high levels are discussed with individual parents, followed up by a formal letter if the matter persists. Unauthorised absences have almost been eliminated, although the potential exists for parents to be contacted by phone on the first day of absence to improve practice still further.

The acting headteacher has continued to take the school forward with the total commitment of all staff and the full support of parents, in spite of the uncertainties over the both the future of the school and the appointment of a new headteacher. The quality of teaching has improved with a higher proportion of both good and very good teaching observed; provision for children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now excellent, and other aspects which were good have become very good.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors’ judgements about the achievements of children in relation to the national early learning goals by the time they leave the school.

Performance in:		Key
Communication, language and literacy	C	well above average A
Mathematics	B	above average B
Personal, social and emotional development	A	average C
Other areas of the curriculum	B	below average D
		well below average E

Overall, children achieve above average standards for their age and the oldest have met many of the *Early Learning Goals* in all areas of learning before they move on to their next school. At the time of inspection, only four of the 77 children were due to transfer to a reception class in the near future. They showed a maturity of approach to learning and achieved high standards across the curriculum.

Children’s attainment in *communication, language and literacy* is temporarily held back by the need to learn to express themselves in English, which for a significant minority is an additional language. The standards achieved in *personal, social and emotional development* are very high: even the youngest children showed an impressive independence for their age and a willingness to work and play with other children. Standards in *mathematics* have improved since the last inspection and are now above average. Children confidently use numbers in every day situations and show a developing sense of shapes, patterns and size.

The standards achieved in *knowledge and understanding of the world* have improved, particularly in children’s developing understanding of scientific concepts, such as growth and forces. The imaginative development of the outside environment into an outdoor classroom has raised standards in *creative development* and *physical development*, through the wide range of stimulating scenarios that are created by teaching staff for imaginative play and the improved provision of resources for climbing, balancing and developing ball skills.

## CHILDREN’ ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children come eagerly to school and show great enthusiasm for learning. They are keen to take part and often show remarkable powers of concentration, becoming totally absorbed in the task.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Most children show good levels of self-discipline and a good awareness of how they are expected to behave. They can be trusted to work on their own and with friends and behave responsibly at work and at play.
Personal development and relationships	Children rapidly develop high levels of independence, self-esteem and sensitivity to others. They show initiative, learn to make sensible decisions, take responsibility for tidying up their own mess and need very little help in dressing themselves. The quality of relationships between all children

	whatever their gender, race or background is something the school has every reason to celebrate.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Levels of unauthorised absence have almost been eliminated.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of children:</b>	<b>aged up to 5 years</b>
Sessions seen overall	Very 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.*

The quality of teaching is of a consistently high standard. No teaching was unsatisfactory. Eighty-nine per cent was good or better and 28 per cent was very good or excellent. Personal, social and emotional development is the bedrock on which the nursery builds its curriculum. Staff also give prominence to the development of language, literacy and numeracy skills in every aspect of work; few opportunities are missed to exploit every planned learning experience.

#### Significant strengths in teaching are:

- The seamless way in which the staff team works with all children;
- Very good knowledge and understanding of how young children learn;
- High quality planning based on daily assessments, which are shared with all members of staff, ensure that every child's need is recognised and catered for in a considered and individual way.
- High expectations and a consistency in the way teachers make these expectations clear to children.

#### Significant strengths in children's learning are:

- Their lively curiosity and enthusiasm;
- Their ability to sustain interest and concentration over a very long period;
- High levels of independence in looking after themselves and in choosing how to spend their time.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is securely based on the six areas of learning and planning takes very good account of the <i>Early Learning Goals</i> . It provides high quality learning experiences for children that are appealing, make them stop and think, and foster their curiosity and imagination.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. This is tailored to the individual needs of each child in full consultation with parents and outside agencies. Children are enabled to play a full part in all aspects of school life and make very good progress as a result.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Excellent. The sensitivity with which this is managed, the quality of teaching and monitoring, and the way in which the school works with parents and carers is second to none. Children make rapid progress whatever their stage of spoken English.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social & cultural, development	Outstanding. The school actively plans for this to permeate every aspect of children's learning and sees it as the weft to the warp of the statutory curriculum. The school is highly effective in celebrating the variety of backgrounds, cultures, experiences and languages that children and their families bring with them.
How well the school cares for its children	The school provides a very high standard of care for all its children, whatever their individual needs and particular circumstances. The way in which the staff assess the progress of every child each day ensures that their learning and emotional needs are planned for on an individual basis.



How well the school works in partnership with parents	Parents hold the school in considerable regard. The acting headteacher and staff have established an equal partnership with parents. This is built on high levels of involvement, very good communication and the willingness to respond in a flexible way to parental concerns.
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### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The acting headteacher has been successful in taking up the reins, and shown strong determination to maintain high standards and take the school forward. Staff have been encouraged to take on new areas of responsibility and have done so with commitment and enthusiasm. There is a palpable sense of collective responsibility among the team and a very good capacity to improve even further.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good overall. The governing body is involved in many aspects of school life and many governors visit the school on a regular basis. However, their involvement in monitoring the work of the school on a more formal basis is underdeveloped and as a consequence they are heavily reliant on the acting headteacher and the Local Education Authority.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. There are very good systems in place to evaluate teaching and learning. Staff development is closely matched to priorities and very effective. The recent introduction of action plans to support each area of activity in the school development plan has improved the school's capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions. However, the overall plan is inadequate and does not reflect the good practice on the ground.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes excellent use of space. Teaching staff are imaginative in their use of an improved range of resources and exploit them to the full. The school applies the principles of <i>best value</i> well.

### 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>• Their children can't wait to get to school</li> <li>• Children behave very well in school and on visits</li> <li>• Parents are made to feel at home in the school</li> <li>• Induction procedures are excellent</li> <li>• The headteacher and staff are very easy to talk to and work very closely with parents and carers</li> <li>• Teaching is good and enables their children to make good progress</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant areas</li> </ul>

The inspection team heartily endorses all that pleases parents. A very few parents felt that they were not kept well enough informed about how their children were getting on and disagreed that the school expected their children to work hard and achieve their best. The inspection team cannot support these views and believes that the school does all it can to communicate clearly with parents and to enable all children to achieve their best. The school assigns a key worker to every child and parents are invited to meet with the key worker each term to set new targets. They are also made very welcome at any time if they have the slightest concern about their child. During the inspection period every child was purposely engaged - and often absorbed - in their activities at all times.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

**Excellent planning and assessment enables the needs of each individual to be met and for children to make very good progress.**

1. The nursery's aim is to enable children to become independent managers of themselves and their own learning, taking into good account each child's needs, interests and experiences. The school has made significant progress towards this aim since the last inspection by improving the ways in which the staff assess children's progress and ensure that their learning and emotional needs are planned for on an individual basis. The evaluation of teaching and children's learning is now far more specific and informs the next step in planning for further improvement.
2. The staff team has devoted a great deal of time to introducing clear and detailed schemes of work for each area of learning, illustrated with photographs that explain to new staff and parents what this means for the children. These long-term plans have been reviewed and updated to take very good account of the *Early Learning Goals*. Working on these revisions, as a staff, has ensured that there is a high level of shared understanding. Teaching staff make systematic reference to these in their termly, weekly and daily plans, so that they know precisely what they want each child to learn. Focusing on one area at a time is enabling all staff to become experienced in planning for the *stepping stones* that mark children's progress through the new *Foundation Curriculum*.
3. Although each child has a key worker who monitors their progress, keeps their record of achievement up to date and meets regularly with parents and carers, the way the nursery is organised means that all staff come into regular contact with all children. Well-managed daily planning meetings at the end of each day provide staff with the good opportunity to evaluate the day's work and to share information. The school has developed a wide range of very effective assessment procedures, from 'post-its' to capture a significant step, to a focused activity when a member of staff works with a group of children and makes very close observations of their how they respond, noting where they need additional experiences to help them understand an idea or develop a skill. Of equal importance, they note what new challenges children are ready for, or how an activity can be adapted to make it more accessible.
4. The nursery considers effective use of assessment to be of paramount importance. Each key worker is allocated two hours each fortnight to update the portfolios of those children for whom they are responsible, choosing examples of children's work, photographs of them in action or children's own words, to provide a record of achievements that spans their time in the nursery. Children are proud of these and they are shared regularly with parents. The staff involve children as much as possible in what they are learning; they build on children's ideas and encourage them to talk about what they have done and to comment on what they found out. The key worker meets termly with parents to discuss the progress their child has made. Parents are encouraged to contribute to these meetings where targets are set for the next term and ways in which they can be involved are explored.
5. The rigorous planning and assessment systems enable the nursery to be very effective in meeting the needs of individual children, whatever their needs and abilities. Where a child has special educational needs, the school works in close partnership with parents and outside agencies. The provision is tailored for each individual, with crisp targets that give staff and children something to aim for, whether it is learning to play with other children or to join in when the room is tidied up. This enables them to play a full part in the life of the nursery, to have full access to the curriculum and to make very good progress. The many children who start at the nursery speaking little or no English make rapid progress on account of the excellent support, very careful monitoring and very good teaching they receive. Great emphasis is placed on giving them time to find their feet and getting to grips with daily routines. Subsequently, they are encouraged to develop confidence in

speaking and to build their vocabulary through very well-structured activities and skilful interactions from the teacher. Older and more able children make equally good progress because staff set them more challenging tasks and encourage them to set their own targets; for example one child had devised a board game that others could play, just one example of how the school's aim is achieved successfully. Children leave the nursery as independent and enthusiastic young learners, confident to tackle the next stage.

**The rich and relevant curriculum enthuses the children and develops in them very good attitudes to learning.**

6. As well as developing a curriculum that is broad and balanced, the staff team has worked successfully to ensure that it is relevant to the needs of individual children, captures their interests and enthusiasms and introduces them to new aspects of living and learning. Many new resources have been purchased and others revitalised. Nursery educators, working in pairs for support, and to bounce ideas off each other, have taken responsibility for developing the outside environment and for improving the quality of provision in *knowledge and understanding of the world*. Their work has had a direct impact on the quality of education on offer to the children.
7. The recent development of the outside environment into an outdoor classroom where each area of learning is given due emphasis, is an example of how very good planning enriches the curriculum. The nursery makes excellent use of space, and parents commented frequently upon the way in which children encounter something new and imaginative to explore daily. During the inspection, in fair and inclement weather, children could be found outside playing a card game where they matched pictures, measuring their building, holding a telephone conversation in the site office, creating their own building plans, reading a book together, using large blocks to build a wall and practising goal scoring.
8. *Knowledge and understanding of the world* is fast developing area of learning on which the teaching staff have focused very successfully this term. The nursery places great emphasis on providing a wide range of first hand experiences for the children that will encourage them to explore, observe, solve problems, predict, reflect critically on what they discover and talk about it with others. These activities build foundations for later work in science, history, geography, design and technology, and information and communication technology. Good improvements have been made in raising standards through developing children's early understanding of scientific ideas, for example, in relation to growth and materials. Children are fascinated by the different conditions for healthy living needed by worms in the wormery, stick insects and tropical fish. They spend time observing very carefully and, through their thoughtful questions, revealing a lively curiosity. The creation of a flower and herb garden, and a vegetable patch, triggers many opportunities to experience a sense of awe wonder at new growth and involves the children actively in the yearly cycle of digging, planting, watering, weeding and picking.
9. Productive links are made between science, design and technology, mathematics and language. In a very good lesson where the oldest children explored an enticing range of fruit and, through the nursery educator's skilful comments and questions, were enabled talk about the colour, texture, shape and size. The children then set about preparing a fruit salad, demonstrating their awareness of the need for both hygiene and safety, and the ability to follow instructions to the letter. The children worked calmly and with great care and concentration for over three-quarters of an hour and by the end of the session, were able to use terms such as stone, flesh, skin and pip correctly to describe their chosen fruit.
10. There is effective development of *literacy skills* through providing children with reasons to communicate their thoughts, both verbally and on paper. Similarly, in developing *numeracy skills* staff give very good emphasis to the process to the process of problem solving and of making and testing predictions in many different practical situations.

11. The nursery's provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and permeates every aspect of children's learning. Every element is nurtured through care and mutual respect. In particular, the school is highly effective in celebrating the variety of backgrounds, cultures, experiences and languages that children and their families bring with them. Displays reflect this diversity: costumes from Nigeria; the celebration of a wide range of festivals (St Valentine during the week of the inspection); notices and labels in many languages. Parents whose first language is not English read stories on a regular basis to children in a tongue that is unfamiliar to many whilst the teacher translates. The children have visited to Chinatown on the tube for the Chinese New Year.
12. In addition to the statutory curriculum, the nursery makes very good use of parents, past and present to increase their enjoyment in learning; for example, a parent who teaches Indian dance organised a display by his students, another, who is a chef, comes in to cook with the children regularly, and mothers and fathers bring in their babies to bath. The local community is a valuable resource that stimulates and broadens children's learning; for example, the working link with the local theatre has involved children in workshops and in visiting the theatre to watch a performance. Other theatre groups and puppeteers are regular visitors to the nursery. The locality provides opportunities to visit the Police horse stables, to walk along the river to look at bridges and buildings, walks to look for holes and shapes, and visits to the park to gather conkers.
13. The whole curriculum offers such wonderful experiences for children at James Lee Nursery, but it is the way in which the curriculum is brought to life by very good teaching across the school that develops in the children such enthusiasm for learning.

**Meticulous and sensitive provision for children's personal, social and emotional development enables them to become confident, questioning and independent young learners.**

14. James Lee Nursery provides a very secure environment where children blossom and go on to make a successful transition to primary school. None of this happens by accident. Personal, social and emotional development is the backbone of the curriculum. This area of learning is developed superbly; teaching is consistently of a very high standard and very good support is given to children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. The rich diversity of children's backgrounds, cultures, languages, abilities and experiences is valued and celebrated. As a consequence, parents have confidence in the staff, and their children, some as young as three-years-old, come eagerly to school and show great enthusiasm for learning.
15. The nursery has developed a very supportive induction programme for all newcomers. The acting headteacher and her staff have worked hard to put their partnership with parents on an equal footing, by listening to all their concerns and suggestions. Staff work hand-in-hand with parents before the children start nursery, and during the first few weeks, to ensure that the important transition from home to school is managed in such a way that any fears that parent or child may have are allayed. Each child is allocated to a key worker who is the first line of contact for parents and is the person who keeps track of the child's progress. Children are assimilated quickly into the school community and learn to play a full part in their own learning.
16. The start of the morning and afternoon sessions is key to this success. Staff prepare the classrooms with great attention to detail, retaining elements of the familiar whilst at the same time introducing something new to whet the appetite. Parents are encouraged actively to accompany their child into the classroom and to spend time exploring a new activity with them, sharing a story or being shown, with pride, work done the day before. Lunchtime is a special occasion for children who attend full-time. They take it in turns to lay the table and sit at family tables with an adult. The social aspect of sharing a meal together is given prominence; tables are laid with brightly coloured wipe-clean tablecloths. Children wait patiently whilst each one is served, are encouraged to make choices, chat together and clear their own plates away afterwards. All this happens in a calm and friendly atmosphere.

17. Provision in the area of children's personal, social and emotional development is second to none. There is a calmness, consistency and clarity to daily routines and procedures. All staff work tirelessly towards each child developing positive attitudes to learning and to each other. The staff provide excellent role models for the children through their good humour, teamwork and the way in which they help each other out. Inspectors observed many occasions when children responded thoughtfully to each other; for example, when a child who had been upset returned to the classroom, she was hugged by another, who took her off to read a book. Children are keen to take part and often show remarkable powers of concentration, becoming totally absorbed in the task. The quality of relationships between all children whatever their gender, race or background is something the school has every reason to celebrate. Where children find it difficult to share, a member of staff will explain quietly what is expected and suggest ways in which they can take turns to use equipment. Children are not made to feel inadequate but encouraged to see things from another's point of view. The way in which small groups of children were absorbed in managing the site office, repairing a house, or rescuing Bob the Builder's cat, demonstrated just how well children of different gender, age and race work and play together.
18. Staff are consistent in implementing the behaviour policy in a calm, friendly, yet firm way. Children are taught right from wrong and encouraged to reflect on how their actions affect others. They are taught to be patient, not only with each other but also with themselves. Excellent teaching enabled two boys, working together on a difficult floor jigsaw, to learn to master their emotions, to persevere and finally to praise each other's achievements. Most children show good levels of self-discipline and a good awareness of how they are expected to behave. They can be trusted to work on their own and with friends, and to behave responsibly at work and at play.
19. The school aims to develop independent and confident learners, and no opportunity is lost to encourage children to develop responsible attitudes to learning, to each other and to all adults. Parents like the way staff notice strong friendship groups forming and encourage children to work with other children as well. Children cope very well with changes in staff because they are not allowed to become too dependent on any one individual. All parents at the meeting agreed that the school gave their children confidence to make friendships and to attempt new and difficult tasks. Most children only look to adults if they have tried to do something and realise they need a little help. They help themselves to a drink, put coats and hats on when they go outside, put equipment away, wipe tables, sweep up and can't wait to roll their sleeves up and wash up at the sink. Personal skills are developed very well; parents appreciate greatly the way their children are never made to feel they have failed at anything, and that everything they want to learn is within their grasp.

**Very good leadership has built a committed, knowledgeable and highly effective team.**

20. At the last inspection, it was acknowledged that the school had established close co-operation between all staff and governors, who worked together for a common purpose. Under the previous headteacher, improvements were made that built on this commitment and trust. In particular, the benefits of a whole school approach, brought about by the opening up of what had been two separate classrooms, are clearly evident in the excellent planning and assessment procedures which have been discussed earlier in the report. Effective and well-understood systems provide very good points of reference for new staff, governors and parents.
21. The acting headteacher, previously the deputy, was well prepared by the previous headteacher to take on the new role. This, she has done, with a calmness and determination that have given confidence to the staff, the parents and the LEA. She has continued to take the school forward with the total commitment of all staff and the full support of parents, in spite of the uncertainties over both the future of the school and the appointment of a new headteacher. High standards have been maintained and new initiatives driven forward with clear-sightedness and vigour. At the point when the school had addressed effectively the key issue from the last inspection, which required comprehensive long-term planning to be put in place, the teaching staff immediately set about a revision of all schemes of work to meet the requirements of the new foundation

curriculum. The acting headteacher used this as an opportunity to develop the involvement of nursery educators in curriculum development.

22. With many changes in the staff team, the school has recently invested more resources in training to ensure that the momentum is not lost and very effective team working maintained. Appraisal operates well and enables work to be reviewed on a yearly basis, and strengths and areas for development to be identified. Teachers and nursery educators have been encouraged to take on new areas of responsibility and have done so with commitment and enthusiasm. They have been supported well in this by regular meetings with the acting headteacher and good quality training. Self-evaluation takes place on a very regular basis in an honest and open way that enables the quality of provision to be kept under rigorous scrutiny. There is a palpable sense of collective responsibility among the team, and a desire to learn from, and support each other, that augurs well for the future.
23. The 'Can do' philosophy that works so well with the children at the nursery has been equally effective with both experienced teaching staff and those new to teaching. Fresh ideas are welcomed and staff are actively encouraged to be innovative. Different strengths within the team are exploited for the benefit of both the children and the staff. Working relationships amongst staff display a vitality that has come from this empowerment. Excellent communication between staff members leads to seamless working and a corporate understanding of the need to raise attainment. All parents who responded to the survey believe the school is well managed and over two-thirds believe this very strongly to be the case. They have confidence in the acting headteacher's ability to provide the necessary stability and to continue to take the school forward.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Information and communication technology is not integrated fully into the curriculum**

24. At the time of the last inspection, the school was poorly resourced for information and communication technology (ICT) and very few of the staff were confident users. Both computers were out of action and use of ICT was limited to tape recorders. Resources have been much improved, particularly in the last year, with the purchase of three robust computers to add to one that is on a long lease. A wide range of software for the new machines is selected on a daily basis to enable the staff to become familiar with the programs in order to incorporate them effectively into daily plans. Children showed great interest in "Bananas in Pyjamas" and were adept at showing the inspector how to activate different scenarios and how to turn the sound on!
25. The nursery now has two printers, one of which serves the three new machines. The children have yet to grasp how their work is printed out in another room. The other printer is set alongside the old computer where children confidently choose whichever software package they wish to use and print their own work independently. Staff have also familiarised the children with the use of the new scanner and laminator so that they can learn how they might use them. The nursery has acquired a digital camera designed for use by children that they are being introduced to with the aim of using it independently eventually. The nursery's intention is to demystify 'technology' and to enable children to begin to understand the link between taking the photo and printing it out. Tape recorders are still used independently on a daily basis by children who take great pleasure in listening to new and favourite stories.
26. In developing the use of ICT, the school's stated aim is to promote education for all children, parents, staff and governors at the nursery. This involves not only actively promoting the use of ICT in all areas of the curriculum, but also providing opportunities for parents to learn ICT skills in a non-threatening environment and creating local community links to enable the nursery to tap into the best, up-to-date resources, knowledge and expertise. Much has been achieved so far in identifying staff expertise and staff training needs. A nursery educator has taken on the

responsibility for leading development in the subject, and is clear about what has been achieved to date and what needs to happen next. This includes imminent access to the Internet for parents, staff and governors; plans are already in hand to enable parents to contact the school via e-mail.

27. A web site is to be created which will include information about the school, schemes of work, displays of children's work, links to the local community and education, a parents' page and information about school trips. Much thought has been given to the value of ICT as an assessment tool. The planned purchase of a digital camera and digital video camera will enable staff to monitor nursery practice, to record achievement and provide an innovative way of explaining their children's progress to parents. The software will also enable staff and children to design short 'movies', thus providing a new stimulus for role-play and story telling.
28. Currently, the school has no policy for ICT and has not produced a development plan as part of its implementation of the National Grid for Learning. These issues need to be addressed as a matter of urgency so that the exciting plans can be resourced and implemented in a systematic way, as well as being monitored and evaluated by staff and governors. There is a range of expertise among staff, but all are keen to get to grips with the new technology so that it can benefit both teaching and learning. All teaching staff have already attended a variety of ICT training courses to meet their individual and team needs. Teachers are about to start training through the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) and the school intends to cascade the NOF training.
29. During the inspection, the computers were all being put to good purpose and both staff and children showed confidence and care in handling both hardware and software. At times, children worked independently; for example, one girl worked adeptly with a drawing programme to create a Christmas pattern, selecting colours and images and positioning them carefully before printing out her finished effort. At times, staff focus on an activity with a small group, developing skills and encouraging talk and decision-making. However, the nursery recognises that it still has some way to go in planning systematically for ICT to be integrated fully into every area of learning, rather than as a 'bolt on' activity. Present planning and teaching enables children to develop confidence and competence in using a mouse, and keyboard, in selecting software on one machine and in printing their work out. However, the absence of a scheme of work means that the same high standards in planning for steps in learning are not yet in place. This was evident when children were filling an outline with pieces of different shapes. The program could be operated at several levels of difficulty, and on occasion, staff missed the opportunity to provide the right level of challenge.

### **The governing body is not sufficiently involved in monitoring the work of the school**

30. The governing body is hardworking and committed to getting the best deal for the children who attend James Lee Nursery. Governors are involved in many aspects of school life, for example many governors visit the school on a regular basis as parents and/or to learn about the work of the school and accompany school trips. The governing body is also extremely active and successful in fund-raising: recent acquisitions include a climbing frame and gardening tools to support the development of the outside environment.
31. The governing body has chosen not to establish regular sub-committees, but sensibly forms working groups for a specific purpose. Some, but not all, governors have taken on an area of responsibility, but their role and responsibilities have not been set out. Although governors are kept well informed, their involvement in monitoring the work of the school is underdeveloped and, as a consequence, they are heavily reliant on the information they receive from the acting headteacher and the Local Education Authority (LEA). This weakness has been recognised by the governing body and a start has been made with one governor undertaking a direct observation of one area of provision and reporting back to the governing body. However, the governing body has not yet established a programme of focused visits or introduced either protocol or guidance to ensure that all staff and governors recognise both the purpose and importance of these visits.



32. The recent introduction of action plans to support each area of activity in the school development plan has greatly improved the school's capacity to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its actions. However, the overall plan is inadequate and does not reflect the good practice on the ground. There is no evaluation of the impact of previous initiatives in order that achievements can be celebrated and lessons learned. Certain priorities lack both clarity and progression; for example, one unchanging priority over three years is to involve governors more in the work of the school without charting how the aspiration is to become a reality. Success criteria have very recently been amended to identify what the children will gain as a result, rather than concentrating solely on what activities are to be undertaken. These criteria need to be made crisper so that staff and governors know what evidence to collect in order to chart progress more easily. Although the LEA retains considerable responsibility for the overall budget, the nursery is receiving increasingly large sums of money directly from government. It becomes, consequently, more important for governors to be in a position to monitor the impact of spending decisions effectively.
33. At a time when the nursery has faced significant staff changes and the continuing uncertainty over its future, governors have given the acting headteacher and her staff their full support. The very strong relationship that exists between governors and staff has enabled the school to withstand these pressures in order to focus on the needs of the children.

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

The school is highly effective in providing a very good education for the children, achieving high standards, developing confident and enthusiastic young learners, and giving very good value for money. The acting headteacher has brought out the best from the team.

The areas identified below are aspects of the school's work that could help the school raise its standards still higher:

(1) Integrate ICT fully into the curriculum, as identified in the school development plan by:

- producing a development plan for the implementation of the NGfL;
- developing a policy, that takes account of all strands of ICT usage;
- developing and implementing a scheme of work that enables work to be planned progressively in each area of learning;
- ensuring that high quality training is available for all teaching staff.

(Paras 28,29)

(2) Improve procedures by which the governing body monitors and evaluates the work of the school regularly and systematically by:

- improving school development planning by clarifying priorities;
- ensuring that each priority has clear success criteria that enable governors to measure the impact of their decisions;
- establishing a programme of focused school visits, based on clear protocol, to enable governors to monitor the implementation of key priorities in the development plan.

(Paras 31,32)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of sessions observed	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and children	9

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	22	61	11	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's children

Children on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of children on the school's roll (FTE for part-time children)	60
Number of full-time children eligible for free school meals	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of children with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of children on the school's special educational needs register	1

English as an additional language	No of children
Number of children with English as an additional language	27

Children mobility in the last school year	No of children
Children who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Children who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

### Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	12	School data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

*Teachers and classes*

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.4
Number of children per qualified teacher	17.6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	130

Number of children per FTE adult	8.1
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

*Results of the survey of parents and carers*

Questionnaire return rate

*Financial information*

Financial year	00/01
	£
Total income	47,640
Total expenditure	41,537
Expenditure per child	234
Balance brought forward from previous year	2194
Balance carried forward to next year	8297

Number of questionnaires sent out	70
Number of questionnaires returned	26

Percentage of responses in each category

My child likes school.

My child is making good progress in school.

Behaviour in the school is good.

My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.

The teaching is good.

I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.

I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.

The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.

The school works closely with parents.

The school is well led and managed.

The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.

The school provides an interesting range of

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	85	12	0	0	4
My child is making good progress in school.	65	31	0	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	42	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	15	12	4	62
The teaching is good.	73	15	0	0	12
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	38	8	4	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	19	8	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	35	35	12	4	15
The school works closely with parents.	62	31	8	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	69	31	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	69	23	0	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of	58	23	8	0	12

activities outside sessions.

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