

INSPECTION REPORT

Randolph Beresford Early Years Centre

Local Education Authority: Hammersmith and Fulham

Unique reference number: 100315

Head of Centre: Mary West

Reporting Inspector: Anne Pitt HMI

Dates of Inspection: 17–19 April 2002

This pilot inspection was carried out at the request of the Department for Education and Skills as part of its evaluation of the first Early Excellence Centres. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) elects that the inspection report shall be published.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE

Type of Centre:	Early Excellence Centre
Age range of children:	18 months to 5 years
Gender of children:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Hammersmith and Fulham Education Authority
Chair of management committee:	Huw Richards
Dates of inspection:	17–19 April 2002
Date of previous inspection:	This is the first inspection as an Early Years Centre but Livingstone Nursery School was previously inspected 17–20 October 1994

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of the inspection is to assure government, parents and the public that the nursery education is of an acceptable quality. Inspection also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that the Centre can improve the quality of care and education provision and help children to achieve the expected standards the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. The Foundation Stage covers the period from age three to the end of the reception year in school. A copy of this inspection report and its summary must be made available free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

This inspection also assesses what progress has been made in the implementation of the action plan that was drawn up following the previous inspection of Livingstone Nursery School.

THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE INSPECTION REPORT

The Centre was inspected by four inspectors, led by Anne Pitt HMI. This is a summary of the inspection report, which is available from the Centre.

FEATURES OF THE CENTRE

Randolph Beresford Early Years Centre was established in April 1999. It was formed by amalgamating Livingstone Nursery School, the White City Day Nursery and the Under Fives Centre. It now provides a range of learning opportunities for children and adults. The Centre serves a disadvantaged community where there is a high number of lone parent and low-income families.

The Centre provides childcare for up to 24 children (full-time equivalent) aged 18 months to three years in 'Under Threes'. There is a nursery which currently provides part-time and full-time places for a total of 130 girls and boys aged three to five. The Centre offers extended day provision for 32 children and runs play schemes during the holidays. There is a Family Centre, which supports parents and carers and provides learning activities for young children. Staff at the Centre also provide advice and training to those working and caring for young children.

In the nursery, one child has a statement of special educational need (SEN) and 22 children are identified by the Centre as requiring additional help. Families who use the Centre represent a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Just over half the children come from homes where English is not the first language.

HOW GOOD THE CENTRE IS

This is an effective Centre. It is well on its way to achieving its principal aim of bringing together high quality learning, childcare and family support under one roof. With very strong leadership and good teaching, the Centre ensures that children flourish. They make good progress and achieve at least average standards for this age group and better than this in some areas of learning by the time they move on to primary school. Children are well cared for and the links with parents are very good. Overall the Centre provides good value for money.

What the Centre does well

- The head and her deputies lead the Centre very effectively.
- Children make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development because the teaching in this area is very good.
- The use made of the outdoor garden area and the indoor gym enables the children to make very good progress in their physical development.
- Good quality integrated services are provided which ensure that parents and users have very positive attitudes to the Centre.

What the Centre could improve

- Some staff need to be more aware that a few of the most capable children could do even better.
- The staff should improve the way they use the information about what children have learned in order to measure the progress made by different groups of children.
- The role of the management committee needs to be clarified.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the management committee's action plan.

HOW THE CENTRE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is the first inspection of the Centre as an Early Years Centre. However, Livingstone Nursery School was inspected eight years ago. The changes brought about when the Centre was formed make direct comparisons unrealistic, although significant improvements have been made to the buildings and grounds in order to provide a better learning environment for the children.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY THE NURSERY CHILDREN

Progress towards the early learning goals

The overall level of the children's development when they start nursery is below average. During their time at the Centre they make very good progress in some areas of learning and good progress overall. They reach at least similar standards to children of the same age when they transfer to primary school.

Area of learning	Comment
Personal, social and emotional development	Children make very good progress and are on target to exceed the expected standards by the end of the reception year in primary school. They concentrate well and are readily absorbed in what they are doing. They work well together.
Communication, language and literacy	Children make good progress and are on course to meet the goals by the end of the reception year. Children listen well and are good at following instructions. They reply to questions with sensible answers. They look at books and listen to stories with enjoyment and understanding. A number of children are starting to write recognisable letters. However, on occasions a few of the most capable children could achieve more in reading and writing.
Mathematical development	Overall, children make sound progress but a few more capable children could do even better. Children's understanding of number is developing well but their ability to calculate and solve problems is not as good. Most children are on target to meet the goals by the end of the reception year.
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Children make good progress in their exploration and investigation of the world. In other aspects, such as knowledge about time and places, they make satisfactory progress and overall are on course to meet the goals by the end of reception year. Occasionally more opportunities should be given to extend children's cultural development and learning of information and communication technology (ICT).
Physical development	Children make very good progress and are likely to exceed the goals by the end of the reception year. They are sure-footed and agile. They use large and small apparatus with precision and confidence.
Creative development	Children show good imagination when painting and when playing in the home corner. Overall, they make satisfactory progress and are on target to meet the goals by the end of reception year.

The attitudes of children and adults towards the Centre

Attitudes to the Centre are very good. Adults value the Centre and see it as an oasis at the heart of the community. The staff treat everyone with respect and parents appreciate the many helpful and constructive conversations they have with staff.

The children's positive attitudes to learning are a strength. They are interested and engaged by the good teaching and excellent outdoor facilities. They listen carefully and concentrate very well. Their behaviour is very good and they are helpful and considerate towards one another. They form strong relationships with their teachers and key worker and are sensible, confident and independent. Attendance is satisfactory.

THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good overall. All the teaching observed in the nursery was at least satisfactory and most was good or better.

The greatest strengths of the teaching are:

- the consistent attention given by all staff to the children's personal, social and emotional development; and
- the use made of the garden and indoor gym to promote physical development.

Staff manage the children very well and as a result they learn to behave calmly and to concentrate for long periods of time. The children are often absorbed when playing alone and with others because the staff plan interesting activities.

The teaching of speaking and listening and early book skills is also effective. Staff nurture enjoyment and interest in books and, consequently, children often independently choose to look at books and listen to story tapes. Mathematical development is soundly taught, especially counting and recognition of numbers. Most activities are pitched at the right level of difficulty for the children. But in both mathematics and language work, staff miss opportunities to provide greater challenge for a few more-capable children. For example, these children could be stretched further to develop their knowledge of sounds for reading and writing, and given more opportunities to use their problem solving and calculating skills in mathematics.

The teaching of children with special educational needs (SEN) is good. Children who learn English as an additional language also receive good support from the adults. The staff show good knowledge of the children and understand their diverse needs, so that all children can fully take part in activities designed to help them learn.

Other aspects of the Centre

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good planning procedures mean that each area of learning is covered well. Relevant and purposeful activity takes place indoors and outdoors. Occasionally, the planning of activities to extend the more able children needs more thought.

<p>How well the Centre cares for its children</p>	<p>Children in the nursery receive very good care. Staff are very vigilant over the welfare and safety of the children.</p> <p>The staff record skilful and regular observations of children. These assessments give helpful insights into children's strengths, interests and needs. The records do not relate to the expected stages of children's educational development though and this makes it difficult for the staff to evaluate the progress made by individuals and some groups of children.</p>
<p>Provision for children with special educational needs (SEN)</p>	<p>Children with SEN make good progress because support for them is effectively managed. Children's individual needs are identified clearly and reviewed regularly with parents. The SEN staff work well together and have close links with the different agencies that support individual children, for example, speech therapists.</p>
<p>Provision for children learning English as an additional language (EAL)</p>	<p>There are good systems in place to support children whose first language is not English from the time parents first contact the Centre. Individual records and termly assessments show clearly, in a way that other assessment records used in the Centre do not, that children make good progress.</p> <p>A specialist teacher focuses on the full-time children who are at the very earliest stages of learning English. This means that she is only able to provide limited help to other children who require some support. Her work is effective. She is beginning to influence other members of staff by providing training so that they become even more skilled at working with children with EAL.</p>
<p>Provision for children's personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development</p>	<p>Good overall. There is very good provision for moral and social development. Provision for cultural and spiritual development is sound. Occasionally, the staff miss opportunities for children to reflect on their work and for them to explore their own cultures and appreciate the similarities and differences in those of others.</p>
<p>The Family Centre</p>	<p>The provision at the Family Centre is good and many parents would be lost without it. The staff are friendly, helpful and supportive. They achieve a good balance between catering for the needs of the adults and the children.</p> <p>The emphasis is on children and adults learning together purposefully through play. Parenting skills are developed well and the Centre successfully provides access to adult education. A number of parents and carers have secured jobs as a result of the skills gained at the Centre.</p>
<p>Under Threes</p>	<p>Provision is good. Children have a key worker who forms a close bond with them and their parents. As a result of this care, children quickly become familiar and comfortable with the routines of the Centre.</p> <p>Children are provided with a wide range of carefully planned experiences which support and extend their learning well. Very good use is made of the soft play and large apparatus in the gym, which helps children's physical development and their confidence. Staff share stories well with their groups, using new words and phrases to help develop their language skills.</p>

Extended day	<p>The extended day care provides a sound service overall. In the early morning session before the nursery opens, children are warmly greeted and well cared for in a relaxed, friendly environment.</p> <p>When the nursery finishes for the day, key workers settle children into the extended day care and respond well to their needs. The staff carefully select different activities to those already experienced in the nursery, but the range of indoor activities is not as stimulating as those provided in the garden area.</p>
Contribution to the development of good early years practice beyond the Centre	<p>This is good. The Centre successfully disseminates information about its work to a wide range of visitors. There were 255 visitors last year, including delegations from Australia, Russia, and Norway.</p> <p>The head of Centre and staff deliver early years training to teachers and others in the private, voluntary and independent sectors. The Centre's resource base and website are attracting increased usage, and are developing well. The staff have provided very good advice and support to a local neighbourhood nursery.</p>

THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

How well the Centre is led and managed

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head of Centre and other key staff	<p>The head and her deputies lead the Centre very well. They direct the work of the Centre with clarity, have accurately identified important priorities, and established coherent strategies for meeting them.</p> <p>The Centre is effectively managed. The staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and are carefully supported through a well thought out system of supervision. Firmly embedded within this system are all the required procedures for regularly evaluating the performance of the teachers. The procedures link very well with the Centre's overall development plan and to a broad range of training opportunities for staff.</p> <p>The Centre is developing a good approach to the principles of best value. It responds well to suggestions received through consultation. There are effective systems to ensure children have a broad education and for monitoring the learning activities that are provided for them. Plans are in hand to monitor the teaching more systematically.</p> <p>The Centre does not have a delegated budget but, with good support from the local education authority, the head manages the available finances well.</p>
How well the management committee fulfils its role in the Centre's evaluation of its performance	<p>The management committee has an advisory role and this is under-developed. It does not have sufficient awareness of the strengths of the Centre, and where it needs to improve.</p> <p>However, it has successfully recruited parent members to represent the ethnic diversity of the community. The management committee meets each term and supports the day-to-day decisions made by the staff well. It distributes an informative annual report to parents which provides a summary of the year's main events.</p>

PARENTS', CARERS' AND USERS' VIEWS OF THE CENTRE

What pleases parents, carers and users most	What parents, carers and users would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like coming to the Centre.• The Centre staff have high expectations about children's behaviour.• The staff provide a wide range of experiences which help children to become more self confident.• Staff are accessible and friendly.• The Centre is well led and managed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are no areas where a significant number of parents identified concerns.

Members of the inspection team entirely agree with the points made by parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE CENTRE DOES WELL

The head and her deputies lead the Centre very effectively.

1. The head of Centre has very successfully led staff, parents and children through a period of challenging circumstances and considerable change with the amalgamation of three settings for children aged five and under. Her very strong leadership has been instrumental in securing effective provision of services for children, families and other users.
2. Together with the senior staff, the head has established a firm direction and purpose for the Centre's work. She has identified the right priorities and devised successful strategies for achieving them. For example, there has been a clear emphasis on developing effective relationships and improving communication. This has led to staff being consulted at all levels, particularly about the policies and what needs to be done. As a result, staff feel valued for their work and share a strong commitment to the aims, values and success of the Centre. The drive to establish strong relationships extends beyond the staff to the children, parents and carers. At all levels, staff are courteous, and respectful, and show equal concern for the needs of the parents and the children. As a result, parents and children are interested, motivated and very enthusiastic about the Centre.
3. The Centre's shared aims and goals are combined with a commitment to educational opportunities for all and racial equality. They are reflected well in such aspects of its work as provision for children with SEN, and for those that speak English as an additional language, with the result that these children make good progress. The Centre has made strenuous efforts to recruit parents from minority ethnic communities to the management committee in order that the different groups have a fair means of making their views known.
4. The head and her senior colleagues have put together an effective staffing structure which clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of everyone, and ensures that there is good leadership at all levels. For instance:
 - the deputies each lead key aspects of the Centre's services;
 - team leaders co-ordinate aspects of provision; and
 - within the nursery, key workers are responsible for small groups of children.
5. All staff are well managed. The strengths of their work and areas for improvement are appraised through a system of supervision. This includes those that are new and still being supported through their induction programme. The areas which have been identified for improvement link effectively to the Centre's development plan priorities, like the recent initiative to develop the assessment of children through 'learning stories'.
6. A well-established monitoring programme ensures that the work teachers plan, and the learning opportunities that are provided, are carefully evaluated. This has led to improvements in what is taught and the standards that children achieve. There are agreed plans for more systematic monitoring of all the teachers in order to identify their strengths and areas where they could further improve.
7. Throughout the recent period of change, the head and her deputies have placed a strong emphasis on staff training. The Centre's programme for this is very well led, and

consequently staff have acquired the knowledge and understanding they needed to tackle the changes.

8. The Centre aims to have a well-qualified team and staff are encouraged to take on further training and study at higher levels, such as National Vocational Qualifications, degree courses and the registered teacher programme. This has led to many staff having a good knowledge about child development and the six areas of learning.
9. The effective involvement of staff at all levels and the very good opportunities for continuing professional development, have been publicly recognised through the Centre's recent achievement of the "Investors In People" award.

Children make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development because the teaching in this area is very good.

10. By the time children leave the nursery, standards in personal, social and emotional development are better than average for the age group. This is a considerable achievement since many children start in the nursery at below average levels. Staff place strong emphasis on this area of learning and teaching is consistently very good. The children make swift progress during their time at the Centre.
11. The Centre has a thorough and well thought-out settling-in programme. This enables the children to leave their parent or carer happily when they arrive in the morning. Parents and carers agree that the children enjoy coming to the Centre and rightly attribute this to the system where one key person moves with them when the children change rooms. This 'key worker' is the main point of contact with the child and parents. The system works well. Key workers create positive relationships and introduce children to interesting activities. In this way, children new to the Centre quickly develop a sense of belonging and confidently start to take charge of their own learning.
12. The staff provide a wealth of appealing activities both indoors and outdoors, and this keeps the children fascinated and eager to learn. Learning is fun. There is plenty to interest, excite and motivate the children. Most show a firm sense of purpose and remain engrossed in an activity for a long time. For example, a small group of children worked for nearly an hour tending the plants in the garden. It was delightful to see how they shared the trowels and forks and sensibly watered the plants with the hose and watering cans. Many similar incidents of good concentration were observed.
13. When children are unsure about what to do they are swiftly drawn into an activity by an adult or another child. There is little aimless wondering around, and children do not usually flit from one activity to another.
14. Adults provide good role models and very often show sensitivity and awareness of the needs of others through what they say and what they do. This influences the children and helps them to learn to respect one another. Children are aware that others find some things difficult and go out of their way to be considerate - for example, when one child quite spontaneously helped another who was struggling with shoelaces. Very little unkind behaviour was seen, and no incidents of racism were observed.
15. The adults establish well-ordered routines which ensure that children are taught systematically to be independent, confident and co-operative. This is evident at 'tidy up' times where staff encourage children to put things away. The children willingly help and work together to get the job done. Adults are very pleasant towards the children and treat them with respect and courtesy and, as a result, they respond well and 'tidy up time' is usually peaceful, well ordered and efficient.

16. Behaviour is usually very good and the children know what is expected of them. The staff are alert to potential problems. They show patient and encouraging approaches and they intervene quickly if disagreements occur. Occasional squabbles are managed quietly and effectively. For example, when two girls argued about sharing labels, an adult intervened to talk about how they felt and to negotiate a solution. One child apologised spontaneously. This ensured that no time was lost and the petty dispute was effectively and fairly resolved.

The use made of the outdoor garden area and the indoor gym enables the children to make very good progress in their physical development.

17. The imaginative development of the garden area and indoor gym has been a major factor in helping the children make very good progress in their physical skills. Skills in this area are well above average by the time the children leave the nursery. The children have a good sense of well being. They are healthy, active and confident.
18. There is plenty of space in the outside garden area for children to explore, experiment and practise their actions. They make the most of it. Children have frequent access to physical activity and are well supervised by adults. The children move confidently and energetically, over, under, on and around the outside equipment. They are constantly on the move and climb ladders and trees, slide, ride two and three wheeler bikes, pedal cars, swing, run and jump. They practise activities with persistence trying to improve performance as they go. Even children who are under three are taught to throw and catch a ball.
19. The staff have undertaken recent training in teaching physical development and demonstrate good knowledge of this area, especially gymnastics. They fully understand how young children develop physically and achieve a good balance between letting them explore independently and providing assistance when necessary. The indoor gym provides rich and stimulating experiences. Here, the staff enthusiasm for children to do well shines through and they challenge children to improve, as for example, when a boy was encouraged to better his performance at balancing on stepping stones without falling off. From an early age the under threes spend time in the gym on the soft play apparatus. The children are unafraid, secure and trusting of adults and are willing to have a go.
20. Fine and gross motor skills are taught well across all areas of learning. The children are explicitly taught to handle tools and writing implements safely and correctly. Children show excellent scissor control and good pencil grip. Staff carefully teach children to refine their skills during their years in the Centre. For instance, younger children practise filling and pouring from containers in the sand and water tray and this develops so that by the time they are older, children pour small amounts of milk from a jug accurately when making bread. Parents are encouraged to follow up activities at home and they describe how surprised they are when their children are able to butter bread with knives and make sandwiches - skills they had been taught at the Centre.
21. Children are offered a range of fun activities and stimuli to help them move individually and as a group. For example, in a music session children learning English as an additional language were taught to dance in time to the music and to stamp a rhythm with their feet. In an imaginative role-play situation, children in the 'hairdressers shop', showed great determination when attempting time and time again to master the art of putting curlers and bobbles in hair.

Good quality integrated services are provided which ensure that parents and users have very positive attitudes to the Centre.

22. Relationships with parents and carers are very good and they feel welcome and at home in the Centre. Parents and carers speak very highly of the Centre, praising its management, the staff and the support they receive.

23. Among the many positive comments received by inspectors, the following are typical:

'I wake up every morning and thank God for the Centre.'

'My son wants to come on a Saturday and Sunday.'

'It is a lovely place to be. Staff are friendly and they welcome you.'

'You are not talked at, you are spoken to. There is always someone there for you.'

24. The Centre has a good reputation and parents describe the lengths they go to to get their children admitted. As a result the places for the nursery are oversubscribed.

25. Parents have access to a wide range of high quality services that benefit both the families and children in the community. Parents and carers appreciate this 'one stop shop' approach. Parents of children with SEN receive a particularly good service. The needs of these children are identified early, they receive good support and there are good links with health professionals especially the speech therapist and physiotherapist.

26. **The Family Centre** is instrumental in assisting parents to develop their skills in bringing up young children. The baby gym session involves parents in extending their children's physical development and co-ordination. The 'drop in' sessions are very well attended. The atmosphere is busy and purposeful as the staff, parents and children interact and work effectively with each other.

27. The Centre is highly effective in enabling parents to gain the skills they need to get work. Parents are offered computer courses matched to their needs. But the Centre is a victim of its own success! Recently, the 'fathers group' (an informal group for dads with crèche provided) folded because most of its members successfully gained employment.

28. In the **Under Threes** there are many informal opportunities for parents to talk to the staff about their child's learning and care. Staff go out of their way to both share and solicit information from parents about their children. In addition there are regular planned discussions with parents about their child's progress. Interpreters are available for parents whose first language is not English.

29. Staff have strong links with Social Services and other agencies. They make regular observations of children in all areas of learning and these contribute to an individual profile through photos and comments on progress. These are shared at conferences with parents and given to the parents who then treasure them when their child moves on.

30. In **the nursery**, 'settling in' interviews help bridge the gap between home and Centre and ensure children quickly feel secure. There is a flexible approach and parents can stay for as long as they like when children first start in the nursery. Parents are invited to share information about their child and this contributes well to initial assessments of the child's stage of development.

31. All staff make themselves available at the start and end of each day to talk informally to parents and this makes them feel part of their child's education.

32. Parents are complimentary about the willingness of staff to listen and talk. The individual record of achievement is an important source of ongoing information about each child. This is shared regularly with parents. Considerable efforts go into the production of these records, which contain samples of children's work together with photographs. Additional information about the child's progress is provided through informal and formal discussions with parents and a substantial written report when the child leaves the nursery.
33. Communication with parents and users of the Centre is good. The Centre has well written and informative booklets that sum up most things parents want and need to know. Publications have a pleasant and friendly tone. Newsletters are sent out to parents to keep everyone up-to-date with events and special activities across the Centre. The notices in the main entrance provide a wealth of helpful information for parents, ranging from job vacancies to copies of school policies and teachers' planning.

WHAT THE CENTRE COULD IMPROVE

Some staff need to be more aware that a few of the most capable children could do even better.

34. The staff do a competent job and teaching is good overall. Even so, there are missed opportunities to provide the right degree of challenge for a few of the most capable children. This can be tracked back to the planning stage where little explicit reference is made to these children or activities matched to their level of development. In practice this means that during the inspection, occasionally, more could have been expected of a few individual children. For example, one able child could write her name legibly but was not encouraged by adults to form letters correctly and was developing poor habits in this respect. The child knew the letter names on her name card but was not taught letter sounds although quite ready for this. In mathematical development, the teaching was pitched at too easy a level when another child was asked to count to 10. Afterwards he showed that he could easily count to 100.
35. The staff have the skill and experience to cater for the needs of different groups of children. In particular, they show a good feel for helping children with SEN. They are good at planning suitable activities for these children and spotting what support is needed and providing it at the right moments. Consequently the children make good progress. These planning skills now need to be used more with the brightest children in mind.

The staff should improve the way they use the information about what children have learned in order to measure the progress made by different groups of children.

36. Procedures for assessing attainment and progress have improved recently and are now good. The recent initiative of introducing 'learning stories' as a way of assessing children's learning through observing them is developing well. However, the assessment information gathered from observations is not used systematically enough when planning the teaching programme, especially for the more capable children. The staff are starting to consider this when they meet at the end of each day to evaluate what has been achieved but, it needs further development.
37. Assessment records provide valuable descriptions about what each child can and cannot do in each area of learning from the time they join the Centre. However, there are weaknesses in the way these assessments are used. They are not securely matched to what children are expected to do at various stages of development and, as a result, the Centre does not have a clear enough view about:

- the progress made by individuals;
- the progress made by groups of pupils by age; and
- whether progress differs for different ability, gender or ethnic groups.

The role of the management committee needs to be clarified.

38. The management committee is advisory in function and does not have formal powers to manage the Centre. It comprises representatives from parents, the LEA, health authority, social services, staff, and co-opted members and is therefore well placed to review and consider the Centre's services for the community. The main responsibility for the Centre's funding rests with the local authority.
39. However, although the management committee meets regularly and ensures that it reports annually to parents, its advisory role needs clarification and further development. The committee receives an informative report from the head at each term's meeting. Members discuss issues like the expansion of facilities, accommodation, and curriculum provision in the nursery but they do not yet consider the effectiveness of services. For example, members do not explore the strengths of the Family Centre, or how well nursery children are learning and where improvements could be made. This limits the ability of the management committee to support the head of Centre with advice about longer-term planning, financial decisions, and the effectiveness of strategic management decisions already taken. As a result, it has little impact on the improvement of services, the learning of the children, or the standards that they achieve.

WHAT THE CENTRE SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

40. This is an effective Centre because there is a shared commitment to do well. With a little more time given to the review and analysis of its performance it could be even better. Staff are already aware of the following areas for development identified from the inspection.

The head and staff should:

- improve the challenge for the most capable children by planning activities to extend their learning especially in aspects of reading, writing and mathematical development;
- link assessment to what children should be able to do at various stages of development in order to measure and then improve the progress made by different groups of pupils.

The management committee, head and the LEA should work together to:

- clarify the role of the management committee so that it:
 - is more effective in evaluating the effectiveness of strategic decisions;
 - has a better understanding of the Centre's strengths and areas for improvement;
 - is better placed to advise on longer term planning and financial matters.
41. The Centre's management committee is responsible for drawing up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE CENTRE'S PROVISION INSPECTED

Communication, language and literacy

42. Children are on target to meet the goals in this area of learning. The teaching of speaking and listening and early reading skills is good and consequently children make good progress. Children are taught well to recognise their names and those of others. For example, children new to the nursery quickly become familiar with their names because the teacher has established this as the focus of a fun activity each day. The older children know the letter names but are not taught letter sounds although the more able are quite ready for this.
43. Basic literacy skills are taught well. The staff are particularly good at promoting enjoyment of stories and books at group times and using props to good effect, to engage the children. Adults also use effective questioning to develop children's comprehension of stories. This worked well with children learning English as an additional language who were encouraged to recall part of the 'Three Billy Goats Gruff' story in their own words. They did this with good expression.
44. A particular strength of the teaching is the way that children's imagination and conversation is developed through role-play. Adults involve themselves in imaginative play with the children and are effective in sustaining roles and modelling appropriate language. In the hairdresser's, children chattered excitedly about getting ready to visit a fairy as they combed, washed and brushed their hair and tried on tiaras! The adult encouraged them to use the correct vocabulary and she herself got involved in their story.
45. Children are given good opportunities to experiment with writing in the well-resourced graphics area. They make sound progress in developing writing skills and these are taught satisfactorily, but more could be expected of the most capable children. Most children write a few recognisable letters from their names and some can write their names legibly. A number of children use mark making and writing a great deal in their play, but there is too little direct teaching to move children on from where they are. A few more capable children could be challenged further.

Mathematical development

46. The teaching is satisfactory overall and most children make sound progress. They are on course to meet the goals by the end of the reception year but more could be expected of the brightest children. Staff usually make the most of everyday opportunities to practise counting objects and comparing size. For example when they ask children to compare the size of plants in the garden and count the number of eggs needed to make bread. Number rhymes like 'Five Little Ducks' are practised regularly to reinforce concepts of number, and children independently choose to play with mathematical resources. They love to build towers as tall as themselves and use the wooden numerals to display the bus numbers they are familiar with. That said, there are times when the teaching is not challenging enough. Suitable opportunities are available for children to learn about shape, patterns and numbers, but adults need to place more emphasis on teaching simple forms of calculation and problem solving to children who are ready for it.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

47. Overall, teaching is sound in this area and children make satisfactory progress. However, they make good progress in the aspect of exploration and investigation of the world. By the end of reception year they are likely to meet the goals.
48. Adults value the children's contributions in this area of learning and are very supportive. However, teachers do not always use effective questioning to extend the children's vocabulary and encourage them to explain and talk about their experiences. There is also more scope for the breadth of children's cultural experiences to be reflected in the resources and explored in the work of the Centre.
49. The garden area is a good resource for developing curiosity and learning at first hand. It is well used. In one area there is a beach, a ship, a lighthouse and buckets, spades and pulleys. Here children work well with minimal supervision. They were observed experimenting with pulling up the buckets with the pulley and investigating what they would find at the bottom of holes they were digging. In another area, where there is a waterwheel, two children played in the water mill investigating how to make the water flow faster into the barrel. They were thrilled to discover that this depended on how quickly the wheel was turned and if there were obstacles in the way.
50. Adults prepare appropriate activities with clay, dough and sand to enable children to gain experience of the different feel and characteristics of materials. There are daily opportunities for children to work with construction materials using blocks, recycled materials and wood and this contributes to children's well-developed fine motor skills.
51. The children's ability to use everyday technology is secure. They are familiar with tape recorders and can use the listening Centre independently. But their ability to use computers is not as strong. Whilst they demonstrate good mouse control, they are not confident and often require adult support to use simple programmes.
52. The children are aware of their own environment and know about where they live. They have made visits to London and have seen Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament. They show interest in the changes in the weather and there was much excitement when there was a downpour during the inspection. Children were very curious and rushed outside with containers to catch the hailstones. They show interest in plants and animals kept in the garden and know that plants need water and the hens eat grass.

Creative development

53. Teaching is sound in this area. Children make satisfactory progress and reach the expected levels of attainment. Adults give the children the right sort of opportunities to develop their own creative ideas using a range of media. The children mix their own colours and create pictures, which show originality, but there were very few occasions observed when children were prompted to talk about what they had done. They learn to stitch and make collages out of fabric and buttons. Children are encouraged to join in their favourite songs and to experiment with sounds using shakers and drums. They enjoy dressing up and pretending and this extends to their creative and physical play in the garden. For example, three children were speeding about on bikes 'We're policemen 1, 2, 3 – we're catching a man'. In the garden there is plenty to stimulate the children's creativity and they express ideas about what they can see, touch and feel. Indoors is not as attractive and the effort to create an imaginative, welcoming and visually interesting environment varies too much from room to room.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY OF PARENTS AND CARERS

ANNEX 1

Questionnaire return rate

71%

Number of questionnaires sent out to parents and carers

180

Number of questionnaires returned

128

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know N/A
My child likes being at the Centre.	93	7	0	0	0
I feel my child is benefiting from coming to the Centre, and is making good progress.	88	10	1	0	1
The Centre has appropriate expectations of my child's behaviour.	73	20	0	0	7
The education and care provided by the Centre's staff is of high quality.	80	16	2	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	22	2	1	19
I would feel comfortable about approaching the nursery staff with questions or a problem.	83	15	1	0	1
The Centre has high expectations of my child's development and learning.	61	24	1	2	12
The Centre welcomes each parent and carer, works closely with each one and values what they have to say about their child.	77	17	1	1	4
The Centre is well led and managed.	85	10	1	0	4
The Centre is helping my child to become self-confident and to develop friendships.	84	14	0	0	2
The Centre's team provides a wide range of experiences, which encourage my child to learn.	80	16	0	0	4
The Centre gives good support to children with special needs.	52	8	0	2	38

Notes

