

INSPECTION REPORT

Thomas Coram Early Excellence Centre

Camden

Unique reference number: 100005

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Bernadette Duffy**

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Lucy Draper**

Reporting Inspector: Susan Gregory HMI

Dates of Inspection: 4-7 November 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 is deemed a Section 10 inspection and that the report shall be published.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE

Type of Centre:	Early Excellence Centre
Age range of children:	6 months to 11 years
Gender of children:	Mixed
Address:	Coram Community Campus, 49, Mecklenburgh Square, London
Telephone:	0207 520 0385
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Appropriate authority:	Camden LEA and Coram Family
Chair of Governing Body:	Dr. Gillian Pugh
Dates of inspection:	4-7 November 2002
Date of previous Section 10 inspection:	No previous inspection

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of the inspection is to assure the government, parents and the public that the Centre's provision and services meet the criteria for Early Excellence Centres. 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 best they can.

THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE INSPECTION REPORT

THE EARLY EXCELLENCE CENTRE AND ITS COMMUNITY

Thomas Coram Early Excellence Centre (the Centre) serves a culturally and economically diverse community. For many of the parents and children, English is not their first language. The Centre is made up of Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre *and* Coram Parents' Centre. These joined to become the Early Excellence Centre in 1999. Each of the two centres has its own head and there is one, joint governing body. The Early Childhood Centre provides 'extended year' nursery education, that is, education throughout and beyond the normal school day. It also provides childcare, for children from six months to five years of age. The services offered by the Parents' Centre that were inspected include: home visiting and work in the community; adult education and courses for parents; a drop-in service for parents; toy and book lending libraries and a Young Parents' programme.

HOW SUCCESSFUL THE CENTRE IS

Thomas Coram is an effective Early Excellence Centre with some outstanding features. It is a well-managed 'one-stop shop'. It provides good quality, integrated nursery education and childcare and offers parents and carers, families and the wider community a broad range of very effective services on one site. The teaching for children and adults is good and frequently better. This leads to the standards achieved by children and adults often exceeding the expected levels. Excellent advice and training is offered to those that work with young children and families. The Centre gives good value for money.

THE CENTRE'S MAIN STRENGTHS

- The heads of the two centres provide very good leadership and effective management and the staff work very well together as a team. As a result, the Centre as a whole makes a significant difference to the lives of parents, young adults and children.
- The joint governing body provides very good leadership.
- All the nursery children are taught well. They achieve high standards overall, and very high standards in creative development.
- There are very good relationships with parents and carers.
- The Parents' Centre is highly successful in its work with community agencies to guide different groups of parents to access training and support.
- Across the two centres the staff have found excellent ways of sharing their expertise, to the great benefit of other early years' practitioners and community agencies like 'Sure Start'.

WHAT THE CENTRE NEEDS TO IMPROVE

Although staff planning is good overall, there are two areas of relative weakness.

- The nursery does not plan sufficiently for a few daily activities.
- A few of the targets in the individual education plans for children with special educational needs are too broad.

THOMAS CORAM EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE – THE NURSERY EDUCATION FOR 3 – 5 YEAR OLDS

Standards in the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage for 3 to 5 year olds	When children enter the nursery classes the majority have not yet reached the levels typically found amongst three-year-olds. All children make good progress. They are likely to meet the national early learning goals by the end of the reception year in the primary school, in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. In their personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development, they are likely to achieve higher than the early learning goals.
Teaching and learning	Good overall. A third of the teaching is very good or excellent and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The key worker system is a strength, and ensures that staff get to know the children very well. The good level of challenge provided through focused, teaching activities enables children to do well. Plans for a small number of the activities are not always clear enough.
Personal development	Very good. The children are happy and settled. Their independence and enthusiasm for learning are developing very well. The staff are very good at encouraging children to relate well to each other, and consequently the behaviour is good. Children have a strong sense of belonging to their nursery community because staff are good at helping them to understand their own and other cultures.
Curriculum	Very good. Staff provide a rich curriculum, that covers the areas of learning well and meets the needs of all children. It is enhanced by excellent resources and regular, high quality sessions with a musician and local artists. The staff maintain a good balance between direct teaching and opportunities for children to choose what they do.
Children with special educational needs	Good provision. Children with special needs are identified at an early stage and make good progress. Staff ensure that parents are closely involved in discussing how well their children are doing, and in deciding the next steps for their learning. A few of the plans for these next steps are too broad.
Children that are learning to speak English	Good provision. The needs of these children are assessed very quickly and an effective programme of support is put in place. Some of the staff speak a number of languages and they skilfully integrate children's first language with English. This ensures that children do well.
Guidance, support and care	Very good. There are very effective systems for the care, protection, health and safety of all children. Good records and assessment procedures track children's achievements. Children's attendance is monitored very well, and this ensures that attendance is at least sound.
<i>Extended day care</i>	Good. The children experience a calm, relaxed, start and end to their day. Good attention is given to nutrition, and the children are offered balanced, healthy meals.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THOMAS CORAM EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE

Provision for children up to the age of three	Very good. Staff are very responsive to the babies' and toddlers' needs and build well on their interests. Consequently, the children demonstrate very high levels of concentration and achieve well. They explore with confidence and enthusiasm and show delight in the experiences provided.
Links with parents	Very good. Parents, particularly the less advantaged groups, are well informed about their children's learning and advised on how to support their children. This ensures that children are supported as far as possible to do the best they can.

CORAM PARENTS' CENTRE

Home visiting and work in the community	Outstanding. The out-reach work is very successful in reducing the isolation of minority ethnic families. It helps them to access advice and guidance, often through the Centre's other services.
Adult education	Very good. The programmes are very well organised, responsive to parents' needs and well taught. Readily available crèche facilities enable parents with potential childcare difficulties to take part. Standards are high, and in almost all courses the learners gain accreditation.
Drop-in facilities <i>including the libraries</i>	Very good. These facilities are linked exceptionally well to other services. They widen the participation of less advantaged groups of parents and provide extremely effective support. Of particular note is the welcoming environment. The level of interaction between users and staff is very good.
Young Parents' Programme	Very good. The programme is very well led and managed. It successfully attracts young parents facing considerable challenges. It provides high levels of support and has a significant impact on their lives.

OTHER ASPECTS

Leadership and management	Very good leadership. The two heads have successfully led the Centre through considerable change. The Centre is managed well. In the nursery, a good check is kept on the quality of the nursery education and the children's learning. This means that the children make good progress.
How well the two Centres share their good practice	Excellent. Across both centres the staff have developed an extensive range of innovative ways of sharing their skills. They provide very effective training for such groups as childminders, schools and settings, and have contributed significantly to national guidance for practitioners working with babies and young children. They also give advice to agencies like Sure Start.
Improvement since the last inspection	Neither the Early Childhood Centre or Thomas Coram Early Excellence Centre have previously been inspected.
Not inspected	The Parents' Centre's holiday play-schemes, crèche facilities for parents' courses and the after school club for children up to the age of eleven were not inspected on this occasion. This is because these services have recently been inspected under the Children Act. Other services not inspected include a fathers' group and counselling.

Parents' views	The parents are very pleased with the services they receive. They would like the number of children in the Foundation Stage reduced, and more places provided for children under three. This is already being addressed.
Children's views	Children enjoy being at the nursery. The staff have discussed with them what equipment they would like to have. Together, they have planned to get more things to use outside. This is reflected in the main plan for the Centre.

PART B: COMMENTARY

ABOUT THE EARLY EXCELLENCE CENTRE ITS CHILDREN AND USERS

1. Thomas Coram Early Excellence Centre offers an *extensive* range of services for children and adults on the Coram Campus. In the local area, there is high unemployment and many families live in bed and breakfast accommodation. About a third of children are eligible for free school meals. A very large number of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a third of them speak English as an additional language. Just under half of these children are at the early stages of learning English. One child in five has identified special needs.

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS AND HOW EFFECTIVE ARE TEACHING AND LEARNING?

2. **Across all six areas of learning, the teaching for children aged three to five is good, a third of all teaching seen being very good or excellent.** As a result the children progress well, and are likely to meet the early learning goals by the end of the reception year in the primary school, in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. In their personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development, they are likely to exceed the early learning goals. This represents good achievement, because when children enter the nursery, the majority are not yet at the levels expected for children of their age. The table below summarises the progress of children *aged three to five* and the quality of teaching and learning in each area of the Foundation Stage.

<i>Areas of Learning</i>	
<i>Personal, social, and emotional development</i>	<i>Teaching and learning are very good. Children do especially well in this area, particularly in the aspects of social and emotional development. For instance, children are happy, settled and keen to learn. They develop very good relationships. Their levels of concentration are also very well developed.</i>
<i>Communication language and literacy</i>	<i>Teaching and learning are good. Children progress very well in their communication skills. They are very confident speakers and listeners. In the other aspects of this area children make good progress. Older children can identify initial letters in their own names, and simple words. They willingly 'have a go' at writing for different reasons.</i>
<i>Mathematical development</i>	<i>Teaching and learning are good. Children make good progress overall. They can count & match numbers to ten, recognise shapes and use the correct language.</i>
<i>Knowledge and understanding of the world</i>	<i>Teaching and learning are good. In a number of aspects, children make especially good progress. For instance, children are very good at designing and making models, and in using computers and programmable toys. They are also learning how to value their own and other cultures very well.</i>
<i>Physical development</i>	<i>Teaching and learning are good. Children make very good progress in the development of physical skills needed to use small pieces of equipment. For example, children show very good control when they handle small tools. In other aspects progress is good, children are confident and agile when they run, jump and climb.</i>
<i>Creative development</i>	<i>Teaching and learning are very good in all aspects. Many children make excellent progress. For instance, children can tap out rhythms as they play. This is well above what is expected for children of their age. The quality of their drawings and craft work is also very good and better than expected.</i>

3. All staff know the children in the nursery classes very well and have a good understanding of how young children develop and learn. The close and caring relationships with the key workers gives the children the confidence to try new, different activities. The very effective way in which the staff work as a team gives the more vulnerable children, such as those with little English or with a particular learning need, effective support and encouragement.

4. Staff manage children's behaviour very well. They teach children to be attentive and demonstrate good manners by saying such things as "Can we read this book together please?". Staff thank children when they help others, for example, when they agree to take and look after a child with little English to play outside with them. As a consequence children are polite and wait their turn without fuss. They offer help, spontaneously showing visitors the way outside, and say "Please", and "Thank you", without prompting. Staff give good recognition to how children feel. They initiate reasoned discussion about problems by using very good prompts such as, "Please use words so that I know what has upset you". They also encourage children to find solutions to problems and stand up for their own rights. Children respond to this very well and can be heard saying "I don't like you doing that!".
5. There is some excellent teaching that fires children's imagination. In these instances stories are told in ways that inspire children to act out their own interpretations. The resources used are interesting and varied. For instance, different fruits and foods are cooked and tasted, ranges of textures are handled, and songs and sounds are listened and danced to.

On one occasion, whilst exploring colour and light during Diwali, a superb range of candles of different shapes, sizes and colours was lit. Some of the candles were floated on water and the reflections of light and colour observed and talked about. The children learning English in this group of 3 year-olds were fully involved, because the adult translated and supported them in English and in their home language. The children responded with awe, excitement and high levels of concentration, using English as well as their home language.

6. In the music and art sessions children make rapid progress and achieve well beyond their age. They eagerly rise to the high expectations of staff. On many occasions children meet high expectations in other areas of their learning too, by persisting and striving to improve in what they make or do.
7. There is a good balance between the activities directed by adults, and those the children select for themselves. In the latter, the staff usually pose questions very effectively and intervene at just the right moment, giving children time to think and respond in their own words. Staff also help children with very helpful prompts such as, "How will you know when the rice in the oven is ready?".
8. Well-planned and evaluated 'focused group' teaching activities provide children with good levels of challenge, for example, in the use of numbers and in early literacy. These activities enable staff to work closely with individuals and small groups. They provide the children with good and often very good opportunities to improve their skills in identifying and using letters, initial sounds and numbers. In these aspects the majority of children make at least good progress. The staff are well prepared and clear about what children are to learn. They use language effectively to introduce, give instructions, and reinforce the learning with interesting materials and activities. The children listen carefully and contribute their answers and comments with confidence and enjoyment.
9. Staff planning is good overall, but there is a small area of relative weakness. A few of the more general day to day 'child initiated' activities, are not planned clearly enough and the 'learning intentions' are too broad. On these occasions, the staff are not always sufficiently aware of the possibilities to extend what children know and understand. This leads to one or two missed opportunities to help children to think about how to solve problems for themselves. For example, when a 'bridge' constructed from big blocks and planks began to come apart, instead of asking the children how they could make it stronger, the teacher put it back together again for them. With more definition to the aims for these few activities, teaching and learning would be even better. In contrast, the plans

for the direct teaching sessions are very clear. They indicate precisely the next small steps for children's learning. This means that the staff are able to assess exactly what children have learned and what they cannot yet do, and leads to very effective planning for the next steps in learning.

10. Procedures for the assessment and recording of children's progress are thorough. The nursery's policy is clear. The policy has effective prompts to ensure that staff all work to the same remit and build immediately on records passed from one class to the next. Staff observe children closely, and at daily review meetings they evaluate well what children can do and need to learn next in all the areas of learning. Overall, they make good use of this information in their plans for what children will do during the following day. The evaluation that staff make of the children's learning in direct teaching activities, is better than when staff assess learning from the 'general' activities. This is because the planning for the former is clearer and staff know exactly what they are evaluating.
11. Overall, children with special educational needs make good progress, and those with complex special needs receiving one to one support from a learning support assistant make very good progress. Key workers carefully monitor the learning of these children and discuss how well they are doing at review meetings. This helps to ensure that all staff are aware of, and updated, about individuals and practical ways in which to work with them. The children's 'learning plans' are discussed fully with parents and reviewed regularly. A few of the targets in these plans are too broad and do not always focus enough on the small steps for learning or behaviour that need to take place. Whilst the progress of most children with special needs is good, with clearer and sharper targets for staff to work towards, it could be even better.
12. Children for whom English is not the first language receive good support from the bilingual staff, and achieve well. The nursery has linked with the Local Education Authority's (LEA's) language support team and is taking good account of helpful advice, in assessing the levels of children's English language. Time is set aside each term for staff to observe the children so that their progress can be carefully monitored. Bilingual stories are effectively told to targeted groups of children. This is of great benefit to them, and also raises other children's awareness of different languages.
13. **Children under three make very good progress because they are taught and cared for very well.** By the time they leave the toddler classes most children confidently converse with others about what they are doing and what they want. They run safely and handle wheeled toys adeptly. Their achievements are in large part attributable to the attentiveness and delight of adults as they share and build on children's interests, enthusiasm and achievements. Very good interaction between adults and children teaches children how to communicate. They use sounds, gestures, words and simple sentences to respond to adult questions about such things as where model animals are hiding. Staff invariably sit on the floor with children to sustain and develop play and learning. Their participation in role-play, such as a 'baby clinic', shows children for example, how to take a telephone message, write up baby's progress and change a nappy. Books are used as a frequent source of reference to pick up on children's interests and develop their ideas. Children point to and label details in the pictures, often copy facial expressions, create their own sound effects and repeat key words. By the time they are approaching three years of age they can identify the repetitive refrains of 'core' stories such as 'We're All Going on a Bear Hunt'.
14. Staff provide very good demonstrations and suggestions of what to do and how to use equipment. This gains children's interest, holds their attention, and stimulates imitation and further investigation. For example, the musical sounds that a teacher created with percussion instruments enthused the children. In response they handled instruments

delicately and experimented with sounds that were in tune with the moods and actions of her example. Children who are uncertain receive individual attention and support so that they are reassured and have time to gain confidence whilst participating alongside an adult. The staff work very well together, skilfully shifting responsibilities when individual children need help.

15. The good planning and assessment of each child's achievements and progress mean that staff are well 'tuned in' to children's interests and learning needs. The system of daily review and planning is used well to build on individual experiences from one day to the next.
16. The very spacious rooms and outdoor area are well organised and resources are used inventively to give children rich sensory experiences and varied opportunities that stimulate investigation. The many activities include exploring the contents of baskets filled with interesting "treasures". In these activities, staff help children to make sense of what they are doing through well focused talk that guides their actions and builds on their responses.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN'S PERSONAL QUALITIES DEVELOPED?

17. **The personal, social and emotional development of children aged three to five is fostered very well.** The children are happy in the nursery and make very good progress from a starting point that is below what would be expected. By the time they leave the nursery, children's attainment is above average and they are likely to exceed the early learning goals. Staff help them to feel secure, proud of themselves and aware of others. The children are keen to learn. Staff build very well on their interests, introduce new ideas and encourage them to keep going. In this way, they acquire new skills. The enthusiasm of adults makes learning fun and exciting and leads to children's very good concentration. Children are not daunted when things go wrong. They respond to adults' suggestions and persist well until they achieve the desired result.
18. Clearly established routines and good access to well labelled resources, enable children to look after themselves very well. Staff successfully help them to manage their own needs. Well timed prompts, such as "Look at the colours and shapes", help children to persist in finding the right boxes and drawers. Staff also capitalise well on children's keenness to organise things for themselves, for instance, when they carry a large item across the room.
19. Children's social development is very good. They have a special relationship with their key worker and are at ease with other staff that they see regularly. The closeness between staff and children, and their responsiveness to other adults that they know is evident in the pleasure that children show on seeing them. Joyful greetings, such as "Hi! How are you? It's so nice to see you!" are warmly reciprocated by children and their parents. Any children that find it hard to separate from their parents are soon settled through the warmth and affection of these good relationships. Children chat easily and informally to adults and listen to what they say. Some find it hard to wait for attention or a toy but clear and consistent explanations by staff about why they are waiting and when it will be their turn, help them to be patient and to recognise the needs of others. Children are gaining a good awareness of differing needs, and draw other children, including those with special educational needs, into the group at the start of the day showing sensitivity and warmth.
20. Children's moral development is good because staff set a very good standard of behaviour that is based on strong relationships, concern for others and care of property. The majority of children know right from wrong, respect the rights of others and also

appreciate what others do for them. They are becoming aware of the impact of their actions on others and apologise spontaneously when they hurt someone. Some children find it hard to control their excitement and feelings. This sometimes leads to noise, over-exuberance and occasional disputes but these occasions are managed very well so that children calm down and resolve arguments together.

21. Children have a strong sense of their 'community' and their cultural development is very good. Staff are skilled at helping them to understand their own and other cultures. They are learning very well how to value their own and other ways of life. Opportunities for cultural development feature strongly in the curriculum across all six areas of learning. As a result a variety of cultures is reflected very well in the books and experiences that children encounter throughout the centre. This was clearly seen during the time of the inspection, through the entire centre's enthusiastic approach to Diwali celebrations, and through the focus on 'Black History Month'. Personal photographs are used well to celebrate each child's family life and all children are involved in celebrating major cultural traditions and beliefs. Staff present these meaningfully through story, music and imaginative play so that children's interest is readily engaged.
22. Children's spiritual development is also good. The range and quality of experiences they are offered, often evoke their delight. On some occasions, for instance when divas are lit, or when children listen to music, or look at leaves, they are calmed and enthralled by the atmosphere that staff create to mark the special nature of the event. Children are being taught well about the relationship between symbols and some beliefs. Although a few special moments are a little too fleeting to give children enough time to reflect and marvel on the beauty and significance of what they observe, private and quiet spaces feature in all classrooms. Children are shown how to give thanks by praising and applauding.
23. **The calm, peaceful and ordered environment in the classes for children up to three years of age promotes sustained interaction and good concentration.** Babies and toddlers are secure in their relationships with the adults who care for them. Good support by staff highlights their achievement and generates children's interest. Children are intent on what they are doing. Staff encourage their developing independence and teach them how to take care of themselves very well. When children bump into others they are reassured and shown how to comfort each other, for example by cuddling and stroking. Children initiate interaction with each other as well as with adults. For example, a child aged twenty months successfully encouraged another of thirteen months to "Come, come..." using words and gestures to lead him to an activity.
24. The nursery has very good procedures for monitoring attendance, and quickly contacts parents if a child is absent. This ensures that attendance is at least sound.

HOW WELL DOES THE CURRICULUM MEET CHILDREN'S NEEDS?

25. **The curriculum for children aged three to five is very good.** The significant level of research undertaken by senior staff has generated a good depth of understanding about how young children develop and learn. This underpins the curriculum very well. It is well connected to the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. Policies are concise, easy to read and follow. They are a good source of information for all staff and effectively shape the consistency and quality of practice.
26. The curriculum is constantly developing in response to what staff know about children's achievements. This means that it is a force for continuing improvement. Areas for improvement are carefully identified and targeted for action. This process has led to initiatives such as the development of a special outdoor area for the children's exploration

and investigation. Where monitoring has uncovered weaknesses, for example in literacy skills and aspects of mathematical development, these have led to the small group teaching that focuses on these areas. This innovation is already leading to improvements in teaching and learning, especially in early literacy.

27. The experiences offered to children are enriched by the expertise that visiting artists and music teachers bring to the centre. These have led children to become involved in such initiatives as creating large sculptures for the courtyard. The experiences give children skills and confidence to express their ideas and work creatively on a large scale.
28. Overall, staffing levels are very good and the nursery has an excellent range of equipment. The provision in the outside area is superb. In particular the climbing 'tower', and the newly established 'science garden' provide very good opportunities to develop the children's skills and knowledge.
29. Very good attention is given to ensuring that all children throughout both nurseries have access to all activities. The staff carefully monitor the children's participation in daily activities. They focus their observations on how well particular groups of children, such as those with special educational needs, boys and girls, and children who are learning English as an additional language take up the opportunities offered. This has led to the introduction of plans for teaching that take better account of children's differing needs.
30. **The curriculum for children up to three years of age is very good.** It is firmly centred on a knowledge and continuing review of each child's development, interests and needs. Proper emphasis is placed on children's personal, social and emotional development, communication skills and physical development. There is very good continuity between the curriculum for children up to three and those who are over three. The nursery's policies effectively demonstrate how the learning of babies and toddlers connects with that of children over three years of age.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN CARED FOR, GUIDED AND SUPPORTED?

31. **The nursery provides very good levels of care for all children.** In particular, the key worker system enables members of staff to get to know the children very well. Key workers' relationships with children and their families are very effectively developed from the start, through the initial home visit, and include the transition from room to room within the nursery. The effective child protection procedures comply with the area child protection committee's requirements. The staff are kept well aware of their responsibilities.
32. From the start, the progress of individual children is carefully tracked. Each day the staff observe and discuss the children and record what they can and cannot yet do. Overall, they use this information well to make decisions about what children should learn next. Staff also put together 'big books', that are individual to each child. These are illuminating portfolios about children's experiences and learning. The parents love them because they give a vivid picture of what their children are achieving.
33. The records of the children's progress are good. These are passed from class to class. The helpful information from the records, and the frequent visits between the classes when children move on, ensures their smooth transition. When the children move on from the nursery to their primary schools, the staff pass on informative 'transfer records'. These assessments provide a good evaluation of the children's progress, and include comments from the children themselves.

34. **The babies' and toddlers' transition from home to the nursery is managed with sensitivity.** Adults place great store on knowing about the children's individual needs and nurture and care for them very well. Very good account is taken of information from parents about the children's dietary requirements and preferences. Mealtimes and domestic routines, are geared to the children's needs and are valued as occasions for individual social interaction. For example, the key workers chat and engage well with children while changing their nappies.
35. **Children are provided with good opportunities to socialise with each other and with the staff in the 'extended day' sessions** before the nursery starts, and after it ends. They share their news about the day's events and chat to each other in a warm and relaxed environment. Through the well-established routines, staff give good attention to the development of children's independence. For instance, children are encouraged to butter their own toast and pour their own drinks.

HOW WELL DOES THE CENTRE WORK WITH PARENTS, CARERS AND THE COMMUNITY?

36. **There are very good relationships with the parents,** who are extremely pleased with the services provided by both centres.
37. **In Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre,** very good relationships are initiated during the home visit when children first enter the nursery. The staff involve parents very effectively in the children's learning and, in the review of their progress. At the start and end of every day, nursery staff have set aside time for parents to chat informally. These informal sessions are complemented well by the more formal termly conferences where key workers and parents meet to review the children's learning and agree what they should learn next. The meetings are effectively developing parents' awareness of how and what their children are learning. They give the parents clear information so that they are better able to help their children to do well.
38. The Early Childhood Centre works hard at finding other ways of involving parents. Nursery parents are offered 'drop-in' facilities where they receive good advice from agencies such as the Health Authority. They can access courses like 'The Nippers Project', run in conjunction with Great Ormond Street Hospital to develop parenting skills. Parents are clear about the benefits of the course, "We are here to learn - I want to be a better parent", "I want to be a better organiser and to channel my son's energy!" Parents also find that the curriculum workshops help them to take a more active role in their children's learning.
39. The training co-ordinator is developing a policy to guide 'volunteer parents'. The development of the voluntary parents' group has been held up by external procedures, but it has also had notable successes. The group has produced video materials of children at play and used them to attract parents into the centre, to learn more about how their children learn and to help staff. The materials have helped to enhance training courses and curriculum meetings by providing real examples of how the children learn. There have also been very positive outcomes for the members of the group. Their involvement has led to further opportunities to develop their skills. Three are training as crèche workers; one began a monthly newsletter and two volunteered to speak about their experiences at a national conference. Volunteers are also being attracted from the business world through contact with a 'not for profit' sector recruitment agency based near the campus. This is a good example of ways in which both centres work at creating innovative links with the wider community.

40. **Throughout both centres, parents are given very good information to keep them in touch with what is going on.** Signs and notices in different languages are strategically placed around the buildings to make parents feel welcome, and parents that speak little English are very well supported by the bilingual staff. Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre's Parents' Handbook is particularly helpful for new parents. The regular newsletters are friendly, informative, and easy to read.
41. Parents have many good opportunities to contribute to the development of the centres. They are regularly consulted through questionnaires, parents' groups and the 'First Friday' Parents' and Governors' Forum. Their views are taken seriously, and can lead to new initiatives, like the curriculum workshops. The Early Childhood Centre's Development Plan reflects improvements that parents have suggested, such as the reduction in the number of three to five year olds, and the increase in places for up to three year olds.
42. The centres have developed effective links with the community. For instance, the local childminders' network is based on the site and operates across both centres. Good use is made of local community venues in order to make services more accessible to the local community. One example of this is 'The Calthorpe Project', a local community group linked to the Early Excellence Centre through the 'Healthy Living Initiative'. It provides a venue for the 'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities' course. In addition, the nursery successfully shares its rich variety of stimulating and exciting resources with a wide spectrum of community groups.
43. **Coram Parents' Centre provides high quality services for parents, families and the wider community.** These services build self-esteem, provide very effective advice and guidance, help to reduce isolation and widen participation in adult education.
44. **Home visiting and out-reach work in the community are excellent.** The staff cover a wide range of activities across the entire Parents' Centre.

The out-reach workers take active steps to reach the most isolated and vulnerable families in the community. Their success is particularly evident in the increased number of families from the Bangladeshi community that use the Parents' Centre. Further testament to their effectiveness is the progression of some parents, drawn in through outreach work, to informal non-accredited classes and on to more formal, accredited, adult education courses.

45. The skills of the staff are highly developed. The staff are confident, friendly, encouraging and informative. Their good advice is underpinned by effective links to a range of services that can be tailored to each family's needs. The presence of the workers at different venues like health clinics, mean that parents and children see a 'familiar face' when venturing to new places. This assures families of a friendly welcome, and helps them to gain confidence, particularly those that are newly arrived in Britain.
46. Out-reach workers have established very good working relationships with other agencies, providers and ethnic groups, such as Social Services, the Health Authority, and Sure Start. This is a key feature of their success and enables them to share perceptions of parents' interests and needs. It means that they can work with specialists and other agencies to extend advice and support. There are also excellent links with parents' groups in three local primary schools. An out-reach worker acts as an advocate for parents in these schools, helps with any concerns and introduces them to adults' courses. Parents clearly value the contact with others, the excellent support and the opportunities for learning.

47. The recruitment of bilingual staff has widened the participation of parents from ethnic minority groups who would not normally access such provision. The workers' good communication skills and fluency in several languages enables such parents to make the most of their visits to families, clinics and parent groups. The staff are often able to make families aware of other facilities that they might find useful and offer practical, guidance in dealing with day to day issues. Many families take up the services offered by the toy and book library, the drop-in sessions, baby massage sessions, parent courses and crèche facilities. Parents speak highly of 'a good network of support'. The staff respond very well to the particular needs of families. Bengali families found it difficult to attend in the mornings. The bilingual out-reach staff took the initiative and arranged a drop-in session one afternoon a week when the families are more able to attend. As a result, a good number of Bengali-speaking parents now use, and are supported by the Parents' Centre.
48. **The adult education is very good.** In partnership with various local adult education providers, the Parents' Centre offers parents and adult learners a good variety of accredited and non-accredited training courses, parents' programmes and workshops. The accredited training has a powerful impact on parents' lives as it leads to access to professional qualifications and, opportunities to gain new employment. Adult learners are provided with crèche facilities. This widens the range of parents able to attend and contributes significantly to the success of the work.
49. Students enjoy their learning experiences. The standard of written and oral skills achieved by learners is high. They achieve well and reach the standards expected of them for the accredited courses. Over the last year, some sixty-three parents achieved qualifications well in excess of the target and seventeen gained employment. The students also gain important personal skills like self-esteem and the confidence to take advantage of new opportunities.
50. The teaching seen is very good. The teachers are well qualified, experienced and hardworking. The courses and workshops are well run and organised. Schemes of work are well matched to the needs of the learners and to the requirements of external qualifications. From these, the teachers prepare their session plans thoroughly. The staff have a very good rapport with students and respond well to their needs. They successfully use a variety of activities and methods to engage and challenge the adult learners.
51. Overall, the resources and materials are good. The main teaching accommodation at the Parents' Centre is excellent. It is well furnished and resourced and provides a very pleasant learning environment.
52. **A daily 'drop-in' service for local parents, childminders and their young children is very well organised and welcoming.** It is well used by parents, many of whom spoke highly about its work and the support they receive. One parent described it as 'a life line'. The aims of the 'drop-in' are well met. The staff work sensitively with individual parents, listening and supporting them with suggestions. They work unobtrusively with the children showing parents what to say and how to develop their learning, whilst they use the equipment inside and outside. The very good impact of this is seen in the positive way that many parents talk to, and relate to their children. Parents from minority groups said that they feel welcomed and valued and that the activities on offer for them, their babies and young children, are very helpful and give them ideas about what to do at home.

53. The music session is highly valued and very popular. Due to the high demand, the Parents' Centre now runs three sessions for babies and toddlers of different ages with their parents. Other activities for parents and children include cooking, a toy and book library, and a weekly session where childminders are especially welcomed. All these sessions successfully promote the sharing of information, ideas and equipment to be use with the children. They also give excellent opportunities for parents and childminders to meet and form friendships with others from a wide range of different cultural backgrounds.
54. **The Young Parents' Programme is one of the Parents' Centre's biggest successes.** It provides a comprehensive network of support for parents aged 16-18 years, who wish to continue or return to education and training. It is very effective in providing educational assessments, one-to-one tuition and finding and locating suitable courses, as well as offering childcare support. The project workers and staff work closely with the parents, mainly young women, getting to know them and gaining their confidence. Staff visit the parents at home and help with practical issues, such as housing and benefits. The courses and workshops not only help young parents to extend their education, but also equip them with relevant parenting skills, such as first aid for babies, effective parenting, healthy eating and computing. The last 'Residential Programme', was highly successful in its aims to support the young parents' educational, personal and social development. So far, thirty-five young parents have successfully taken educational courses. Completed training has led to qualifications in such areas as literacy, numeracy, General Certificates in Secondary Education, and General National Vocational Qualifications.

HOW WELL IS THE CENTRE LED AND MANAGED?

55. **The strong leadership and effective management, together with the very good teamwork of the staff** have resulted in the Early Excellence Centre as a whole making a significant difference to the lives of parents, young adults and children.
56. The heads of the two centres provide very good and cohesive leadership. Staff, children and their families have been very successfully led through periods of considerable change: in the Early Childhood Centre where there has been an amalgamation of two settings for children under five; and in the Parents' Centre which recently had an effective, 'acting' head for four months. Although the senior managers of both centres are new to their posts, the heads have successfully inducted them into their roles.
57. Both the substantive heads are well qualified, have considerable expertise in their areas of work, and are very good at communicating the main purpose and aim of the Early Excellence Centre. They place a strong emphasis on self-evaluation and have accurately identified priorities for development and the action that needs to be taken. Consequently the staff have an enthusiastic, professional approach to further improvement, and are clear about what needs to be done. They demonstrate a strong desire to succeed.
58. The staff work very well together as a team. They have a strong commitment to the parents, and support the needs of less advantaged groups from the local community very well. They understand well, how to link the strands of the different services together. This is central to the Centre's success. The very effective work of the Centre in guiding groups of parents to access advice, training, and support, together with regular meetings between staff and parents, to discuss how well the children are doing, ensure that parents are able to make valuable contributions to their children's care and learning.

59. The joint governing body provides very good leadership. It successfully represents the interests of parents and local bodies like the Primary Health Care Trust. Governors are kept well informed about developments, through a programme of visits, reports from both heads, and through regular meetings. This means that governors are able to take well-judged decisions about the provision of existing and future services. They also play an important role in monitoring the Centre's work, by for example receiving and discussing both internal and external evaluations. As a result, they have a good awareness of the strengths of the Centre's work, and where there is room for further improvements.
60. **In the Early Childhood Centre there is an effective programme to monitor and evaluate teaching and its impact on children's learning.** The staff have clearly defined responsibilities, and contribute well to the process of self-evaluation. Strengths and areas needing further improvement are identified, action plans are formed, and these are linked directly to the development plans. The audit of curriculum provision carried out by team leaders, together with the very careful analysis of how well children engage in learning activities uncovered weaknesses, for example in literacy skills and aspects of mathematical development. The right action is being taken to improve the children's achievement. It is clearly reflected in the development plan, and forms the basis for initiatives in teaching and learning, such as the provision of focused teaching activities to improve early literacy and numeracy. Here, the additional challenge posed to children has led to good progress.
61. Good performance management systems are in place. Team leaders monitor teaching, offer guidance and support, and set staff targets that are appropriately linked to the areas that the senior staff have identified for improvement. The nursery staff also check the learning of different groups of children through careful observations to gauge the overall impact of adult interactions and to find out how well different groups of children are involved in activities.
62. Across both centres there is a very strong commitment to professional development. This is linked both to raising the overall quality of provision for children and adults, and to the personal development of staff. The staff are actively encouraged to study for further qualifications. This has helped staff to address priorities for improvement, and for some, it has led to promotion both within and outside the centres. The nursery provides very good opportunities for graduate teachers, and also benefits from the expertise that they offer.
63. Grants have been well used to maintain the very good staffing levels and to resource developments. The Early Childhood Centre does not yet have a fully delegated budget, but is in a good position to take this on in the near future. Day to day finances are managed very thoroughly by the nursery's administrator, and monitored carefully by the head. Both centres have developed a good approach to the principles of best value. Parents and children are regularly consulted and their views are reflected well in the priorities for improvement. Feedback from parents and other users indicates high levels of satisfaction. The emphasis on self-review and the shared commitment to continuing improvement are both very strong.
64. **Both Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre and Coram Parents' Centre have found excellent ways of sharing their good practice.** They fully meet the DfES expectations in this aspect of their work. The centres receive many visitors from outside the LEA, both from this country and from abroad. The staff work well with visitors to discuss their work, to share good early years' knowledge and skills and to give information about setting up Early Excellence Centres. The heads of both centres have

shown a strong commitment to the wider development of community support, parents' education and early education through work with local groups and agencies, and through national and international bodies.

65. There are very close links between the Early Childhood Centre and the Early Years' Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and LEA. The head of the Early Childhood Centre and the training co-ordinator chair EYDCP committees. Communication with the EYDCP is very good and ensures that the Early Excellence Centre is involved in local authority strategies for early years' development. The unique contribution that the nursery staff make to training for nursery and reception class teachers and to staff in nursery grant funded settings, is highly valued. The Early Childhood Centre provides good opportunities for early years' practitioners and teachers to develop their practice, particularly in the areas of observations of children, the children's transition between home and school and, the use of the outside area and local community. The advice, guidance and training provided is helping the EYDCP and LEA to meet their targets for raising standards in the quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage.
66. There is very effective support for the childminders' network. This has led to a growing number of childminders in the group, and to their good achievement. The childminders have responded well to the advice and training provided, and have begun to develop their own ideas. For instance, they are now developing a series of 'good practice sheets' relating to such areas of learning as mathematics. Effective placements are also provided for pupils on school and work experience, and for students on courses related to early years' health, care and education.

WHAT SHOULD THE CENTRE DO TO IMPROVE?

67. **In order to further improve the already good standards, the head of the Early Childhood Centre and nursery staff should ensure that:**
- the learning intentions for the day to day 'general activities' are clear in staff plans (paragraphs 9, 73, 77, 78, 88, 83); *and that*
 - the targets in the Individual Education Plans for children with special educational needs clearly indicate small achievable steps (paragraph 11).

The governing body 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.

WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN THE AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN AGED 3 – 5?

Communication, language and literacy

68. **In this area, children are taught effectively, and progress well.** By the time they leave the nursery children's attainment is average overall. They are on course to meet the early learning goals at the end of the reception year.
69. Systematic assessment of children's communication and language skills on entry, followed by careful planning and very good teaching in these aspects, ensures that almost all children become very confident speakers and listeners from a below average starting point. The few children with complex special needs also make good gains. The children that transfer from the 'up to threes' nursery, and the more capable, achieve particularly well.
70. From the start, the staff teach the children to be attentive. Children respond well to simple instructions because adults provide clear, polite, directions. Staff give them good opportunities to listen and to think things through. The staff are skilled at maintaining a very good commentary about what is happening and, providing children with new vocabulary and phrases. Bilingual staff support children learning English very well, by emphasising key points and words in their mother tongue and in English. The staff are also good at giving prompts that encourage children to talk to, and respond to, one another when they play. As a result of the consistent approach to developing communication and language skills, the older and more capable children speak clearly and confidently. They show a good awareness of the listener, can initiate conversations, give explanations and, ask questions.
71. The staff are good at teaching children to respect and value books. Staff have created many well laid out and comfortable reading areas that attract children to books. The core book scheme ensures that all children become very familiar with a selection of 'high quality' stories. In addition to the scheme, a good focus is given to sharing and telling a wide range of well-chosen stories. These capture the children's attention well and the story telling is often enhanced by the use of puppets and other visual props from the nursery's 'story sacks'. The staff carefully include the children at the early stages of learning English by telling stories in both English and their first language. Consequently, when children play, their knowledge of book 'language' is evident.
72. The good encouragement and timely interventions and questions of staff, help the children to use imaginative language to re-create experiences from stories they know well. The older and more capable children can re-tell stories in sequence in their own words, show a good understanding of the elements of stories such as the main characters, and recognise one or two familiar words. The regular use of the 'talking books' on the computer is a good way of helping these children to predict outcomes and think of alternative endings. Staff enhance the effective teaching in this area, by providing a 'Home loan' scheme, through which parents and children can borrow books. Staff also offer helpful guidance to parents about sharing books and developing important reading skills.
73. The staff have made a concerted effort to improve teaching and learning of letter sounds. Short teaching activities that have very clear aims, and focus on linking sounds and letters have improved the level of challenge, particularly for the older and more capable children. They are making good progress in learning to identify letter sounds and names. They know that there are 'big and small' letters, and can hear and sound initial letters in their own names and simple words.

74. Early writing skills are taught well. Staff equip the children with a broad range of writing materials, and provide them with many good opportunities to write for a good reason. For instance, children are given good encouragement to have a go at writing in their Diwali cards, and to scribe and copy labels for their art, craft, and design work. All children routinely 'write' their own names. These activities successfully help the children to link their developing knowledge of letter sounds with symbols and words. The older children are shown how to form the letters correctly and are taught about the use of capital letters for their names. Occasionally, the learning intentions for the routine, child-initiated activities are not sufficiently clear, and one or two of the staff miss 'learning' opportunities, for instance, to help the more capable children to write very simple phrases.

Mathematical development

75. **Teaching and learning in mathematics are good.** Children are given many good opportunities to develop their mathematical skills and make good progress, especially through the specific maths activity groups. For example, staff make effective use of programmable toys in more structured activities to help children to learn about direction and orientation. The children's attainment is average overall, and they are on course to achieve the early learning goals.
76. Children are taught to understand the concept of big and small and many recognise different flat shapes such as circles, triangles and squares. They are also able to fit two-dimensional shapes together.
77. Number concepts are taught and reinforced particularly well by staff. They are skilled at weaving them in through stories, rhymes and, into everyday practical routines and activities. Children have a good grasp of numerals and number names to 10 and a number of older and more capable children know numbers well beyond this. They can match objects to numerals and are learning the idea of one more, and one less, with some children being able to add similar numbers. For example, in a focused mathematics group that was adding numbers using pasta, one child said "I know $5 + 5$ makes 10", and when it was checked by the group with the teacher the child said, "I guessed just right!".
78. Mathematical language is introduced and used effectively by staff and linked well to whatever activities the children are involved in. For example, when looking at a range of different candles the teacher used the term, 'pairs' to group them by colour and size. Another instance was outside in the scientific area. Children collected stones in a big bucket to weigh them on a spring hook. They were asked, "Is it less or more?" "Is the number of pounds (on the dial) getting bigger?". This effective way of introducing mathematical language that is closely linked to what the children are doing, encourages them to use it on their own. When two 4 year olds and a 3 year old were using different size containers in the water tray they demonstrated a very good grasp of mathematical language by saying things like, "It's the wrong shape", "Which shape is it? It looks round", "No it doesn't!".
79. There are examples of staff beginning to help children to think through ways to solve problems, for instance, by using the different building blocks to discuss their shapes and properties and to find out how they fit together. However, opportunities to extend this aspect of mathematical thinking are sometimes missed because when children engage in more general activities, there is insufficient guidance in some of the day to day planning to help staff ask the right questions.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

80. **In this area, children are taught well and make good progress.** In some aspects their progress is very good because the staff make effective use of the high quality resources. Children's attainment is above average overall and they are likely to exceed the early learning goals.
81. Staff manage the use of information and communication technology very well and provide children with lots of good opportunities to experiment. Adults give clear instructions and encourage children to explain to each other what they have been doing. This contributes well to children's expertise in using computers and programmable tools. They are adept at using the mouse when following programs and some can write their names on the computer. Effective use of programs such as 'Talking Stories' and 'Dressing Teddy' securely underpins learning in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development.
82. There are many very good opportunities for children to build and make things. Staff guide them very well in considering how to design their models to achieve particular ends. For example, when making a sail stay erect on a boat. Good demonstrations and explanations from staff and visiting artists enthuse children and help them to learn techniques like printing.
83. Children are provided with many meaningful opportunities to learn about their own and others' cultures and beliefs. Stories, like 'Rama and Sita', are used very effectively to celebrate and explore beliefs and traditions. The story ideas are further exploited through well-developed role-play, music, and "focus activities" that explore such things as the use of candles and the significance of light. Good use is made of cooking to talk about preferences in food and the origins of spices. Visiting artists and music teachers contribute significantly to the quality of children's learning. They use the Centre's teaching plans as a point of reference to introduce activities that heighten children's awareness of cultural richness.
84. Outstanding *provision* is made for children to explore and investigate the world around them. All indoor and outdoor areas are well-resourced to excite early scientific enquiry and engage children in finding out about the natural world. Overall, the teaching is of good quality and generates good progress in the children's learning when they explore and investigate. Exciting activities, such as those in the science garden, immediately stimulate children's curiosity, and motivate them to explore different materials. They investigate, experiment and pose problems through such activities as pouring water through a series of chutes and obstacles and by making large, inter-connecting cogs turn. Occasionally though, a few staff are not sufficiently clear about what is planned for children to learn. When this happens, their teaching does not always fully capitalise on the extensive learning environment that has been imaginatively designed. For instance, they pose good 'how and why' questions that stimulate enquiry but sometimes they do not fully sustain children's investigations.
85. Children are learning well how to relate past and present and are gaining a secure understanding of places and features of the environment providing an early grounding in history and geography. They are gaining a good awareness of the passage of time because days of the week, ideas about yesterday and tomorrow and the changing seasons are taught systematically well in key worker groups. Children's understanding of the sensations and character of weather are promoted very effectively through exciting outdoor experiences such as splashing and running in the rain.

Physical development

86. **Overall the teaching and learning are good. As a result the children achieve well.** Their attainment is above average overall, and they are likely to exceed the early learning goals.
87. The staff are especially good at teaching the children how to use small tools and equipment from the earliest possible stage. Consequently, all children make very good progress in this aspect and the children that transfer from the 'up to threes' nursery do extremely well. The children are provided with a very good range of opportunities to develop their skills through general activities. For instance, they have been taught how to: thread pasta and buttons to make garlands; fix small, flat shapes together to construct bigger three-dimensional shapes; and pick up tiny pieces of glitter to decorate collage work. Through particular teaching activities, children are taught how to handle scissors safely and how to manipulate small glue sticks so that they cover surfaces evenly. They show very good control when handling fine paintbrushes and using rollers to print. The older children are developing a good pincer grip when drawing and having a go at writing.
88. The children make good progress overall in developing physical skills that involve the use of their whole bodies. For some children these skills are limited when they enter the nursery. The 'tower', an impressive piece of climbing equipment, is effectively managed and supervised by staff, and provides very good opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. Staff give very good encouragement to the children to experiment and have a go at the more challenging aspects of the tower by showing them what to do. The children are hugely enthusiastic and respond well. For example, they confidently jump on and off the rope swing and persist in trying to improve their grip on the knot with their hands, arms and feet. Others are taught how to control the tyre swing. The children with special needs are also very well supported. They are successfully taught the skills they need, like holding on and jumping, in order to explore the tower with confidence. One such child was warmly encouraged, and succeeded in climbing halfway up the rope ladder on her own.
89. Outside the tower enclosure, staff carefully structure the equipment to encourage the children to develop confidence and have a go by themselves. Almost all the children are extremely confident. Children skilfully manoeuvre wheeled toys over the bridge and around the paths. They are agile and easily travel around, under, over and through climbing equipment and tunnels, with a good awareness of space and each other. Overall, in this area of the garden, staff interact well with the children to encourage and talk to children about their actions, but the occasional lack of clarity about how best to help the children learn in these activities leads to missed opportunities. This means that some staff do not always extend the children's skills, for example by helping them to refine their movements even further when they move along or jump off equipment, or by encouraging children to think about ways of moving small pieces of equipment by themselves.

Creative Development

90. **Throughout the nursery classes, children come into contact with a rich range of creative experiences that stimulate and feed their imagination very well.** The teaching is very good overall. In some aspects the teaching is excellent and many children make exceptional progress. The children are likely to exceed the early learning goals.

There is a driving force and enthusiasm for creative development, coupled with a high level of expertise in this area. The high standard of achievement goes well beyond the early learning goals in art and design and music and prepares children especially well for the reception class and for Key Stage 1, when they transfer to their primary schools. Regular opportunities to work with artists from the October Gallery and a music specialist, raise children's awareness and skill in the use of colour, texture, movement and sound. Their responses, which are imaginative and individual, are displayed or photographed for all to share and use.

91. The ways in which the children respond to their experiences, and the quality of their work are well above the normal expectation for their age. Their attainment is above average and they are likely to exceed the early learning goals. Their recent drawings, for example, of different fruits that they have done for the 'Big Draw' art competition, reflect careful observation and attention to detail. Children are very aware of colours and shades of colour, pointing out different greens and reds as they paint. They have very successfully designed and made large papier -mâché models of mini beasts and a large weaving using ribbon, wool and string. They have also used clay and dough to mould divas or moulds for printing.
92. The impact of the very good teaching is clearly evident in the children's enjoyment and enthusiastic response and in the high level of their involvement and concentration. Staff model, describe and talk to their children about ideas of what they could do, and ways in which they could express their own ideas. For example large pieces of beautiful Indian cloth and other fabrics were felt, examined and discussed. This stimulated the children to use these and other fabrics they brought from home, to make their own costumes and act out the story of 'Rama and Sita'.
93. Particular techniques and skills are taught carefully and effectively by staff. Wide ranges of resources are made available and staff give very clear explanations, for example, of how to print with rollers. They remind children as they work to "Use plenty of paint", and "You might want to choose some different things to print with". Children are encouraged to assess their work, which means they think carefully about what they are doing. An example of this was when one child spent a long time deciding whether to, or where to, add more glitter to her Diwali card.
94. The teaching of music in weekly sessions by a music specialist, funded by the National Foundation for Youth Music, is outstanding. A wide range of songs, jingles and nursery rhymes are introduced. A particular 'core set' of songs ensure that rhythm and musicality are easily achievable as they have a limited range of notes. The children know this core set well and sing and accompany them with gusto. Many opportunities are given to tap out or make up repeated rhythms.
95. A wide variety of different instruments are introduced in a way that catches children's attention and interest so that they really listen to the tones they make. For example, Indian bells were used, to which the children listened intently. The teacher then helped the children to attach the bells to their legs. She enthusiastically gathered their hands to dance and make the bells jingle, whilst they were accompanied by taped Indian music. The children and staff's enthusiasm and enjoyment are evident in these sessions and over-spill naturally into other times of the children's day. For example, children sing as they work making up their own tunes and words, or tap out rhythms on the equipment as they explore and play.

**THOMAS CORAM EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE:
RESULTS OF THE SURVEY OF PARENTS AND CARERS**

ANNEX 1

Questionnaire return rate

62%

Number of questionnaires sent out	99
Number of questionnaires returned	61

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes coming to Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre	85	13	2	0	0
I am happy with the way staff handle behaviour	62	33	2	0	3
Staff talk to me about my child's progress	72	25	0	0	3
I would approach staff if I had a problem or a question about what was happening	74	21	0	0	5
Staff care about my child and want him/her to do well	87	13	0	0	0
I believe that Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre is well managed and led	75	20	2	0	3
Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre is helping my child become confident and make friends	85	13	0	0	2
I think that Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre provides good learning experiences for my child	80	20	0	0	0
Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre provides good support for children with special needs	41	18	3	0	38
I feel involved in my child's learning	57	38	3	0	2
I feel that my child safe and well cared for	82	18	0	0	0

**THOMAS CORAM EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE
AND CORAM PARENTS' CENTRE:
RESULTS OF THE SURVEY ABOUT OTHER SERVICES PROVIDED**

ANNEX 2

Questionnaire return rate

100%

Number of questionnaires sent out

43

Number of questionnaires returned

43

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The staff are welcoming, approachable and helpful	93	7	0	0	0
The courses/workshops/ drop-in sessions are well run and organised	84	9	0	0	7
The environment for adults attending courses/work-shops/drop-in sessions is appropriate	77	9	0	0	14
I have benefited from the courses/workshops/ drop-in sessions that I have attended	84	7	2	0	7