

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **ROBERT OWEN EARLY YEARS CENTRE**

Greenwich, London

LEA area: Greenwich

Unique reference number: 100102

Headteacher: Ms Judith Stevenson OBE

Lead inspector: Mrs M Summers

Dates of inspection: 17-18 May 2004

Inspection number: 265626

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Early Excellence Centre
School category:	Maintained
Age range of pupils:	0-4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	218

School address:	43 Commerell Street Greenwich London
Postcode:	SE10 0EA

Telephone number:	020 8858 0529
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Laura Brown

Date of previous inspection:	N/A
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## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This purpose-built Early Years Centre opened in 2000. It developed from Robert Owen Nursery School which was located nearby. The centre caters for 218 children between three months and four years old. It provides a service for 50 weeks of the year from 8am until 6pm. It is designated an early Excellence Centre, Children's Centre and Neighbourhood Nursery. It is a Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Regional Leadership and Management Centre for Early Years. It provides a meeting and training base for the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

Places at the centre are highly sought after. There is a long waiting list for admission. Thirty-eight children attend full-time and the remainder are part-time. The children are grouped according to age. There is a baby room catering for those up to a year old. There are two groups of one-year-olds, two of two-year-olds and four groups of mixed three- and four-year-olds. Just under half the children come from White British families. The rest represent a diverse range of ethnic minority groups, the main being from other White and Black backgrounds and those from mixed race families. A very small number are from refugee families. Nine per cent of children are in the early stages of English language acquisition. Seven per cent have special educational needs and just under one per cent have a statement of special educational need. Children start at the centre with a broad range of attainment but, overall, are at expected levels for their age. When they start in the Foundation Stage at age three, those who have already been at the centre for some time are at higher levels of attainment than expected for their age. Children transfer to a wide range of schools when they leave the centre.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### Overall evaluation

Robert Owen Early Years Centre is providing an **extremely effective** service for children and their parents. Sensitive and reflective leadership and management result in all staff working very well together to provide a very well-organised and stimulating range of experiences for the children. The children respond very well to the high levels of care and support they receive and quickly become confident and excited about their learning. All children, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, achieve very well. Most leave the centre about a year ahead in their levels of attainment when compared to their counterparts in other schools. The centre provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership and direction to the work of the centre. She is supported very effectively by senior staff and governors.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Adults know the children extremely well and provide activities at the right levels to move them on quickly in their development.
- Children achieve very well in virtually all areas of their learning. Some of their mathematical skills, whilst good, are not as well developed as other aspects of their learning.
- Children are cared for and supported very well. They quickly become confident and extremely positive about their learning. They show remarkable concentration and perseverance for such young children.
- The curriculum is well organised and provides a rich and exciting range of experiences to stimulate and involve the children.
- The centre works extremely well with parents who support their children very well and have a great impact on their achievement. There are very good links with community services which provide additional support for parents and their children.

This is the centre's first inspection since it became an Early Years Centre, although it was previously inspected in March 1999 when it was a nursery school. The transition has been managed extremely well and improvement is very good. Opening times have been extended and the centre now caters for children between birth and four years old. It has provided more services to benefit parents, their children and the wider community. These changes have been accomplished smoothly and successfully with no adverse effect upon children's achievement. Further improvements are planned to extend the services it provides for the community.

### Standards achieved

Children's achievement is **very good**. Those who start as babies or toddlers have a head start on those who begin later as three- or four-year-olds. They benefit greatly from the excellent range of experiences offered and the very high quality of adult support they receive. By the time they transfer into Foundation Stage classes at age three, they already exceed levels expected for their age. Children in the Foundation Stage also achieve very well because of the very good teaching they receive and the extremely well-planned curriculum which meets their needs and interests. When they leave the centre to transfer to classes elsewhere, many children are on track to exceed the Early Learning Goals by the time they finish their Reception year. Achievement is very good in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world, and creative and physical development. Achievement is good in mathematical development but computing and problem solving skills are not as well developed as number and counting skills. All groups of children achieve highly, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. This is because of the excellent assessment systems which are in place to ensure individual needs are catered for.

Children's personal development is **excellent**. They are keen and enthusiastic learners. They behave very well, playing happily with one another and sharing and taking turns when appropriate. They are very polite and outgoing. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

### **Quality of education**

The centre provides a **very good** quality of education for its children. Teaching and learning are **very good**. Adults know the children extremely well. Assessment systems are excellent. Adults track children's progress carefully so that they are able to provide activities at the right level for each child. Adults in the baby room plan a variety of experiences to arouse the children's interest and move them on in their development. Effective team work ensures that information is shared and that all adults are aware of each child's strengths and weaknesses. Staff organise a wide range of stimulating and interesting activities which engage the children and help them progress quickly in all aspects of their development.

The curriculum is excellent. No matter what age they are, children receive extremely high quality experiences to cater for all aspects of their development. They are cared for and nurtured very effectively. Parents support their children extremely well and have a great impact on their achievement. Children and their parents benefit significantly from the wide range of additional support offered by the centre, for example, speech, physical and occupational therapy. Further links with other agencies are planned to extend services to the wider community.

### **Leadership and management of the school**

Leadership and management are **very good**. The centre is extremely well led by the headteacher who is supported by a very strong leadership team. Each member has high level skills and experience which benefits the centre and its children tremendously. Governors provide very effective support. They have a very good knowledge and understanding of the centre's work and are active in planning for its development. Management is very effective and ensures that the centre runs smoothly. This includes the arrangements for community use as well as provision for the children. The centre has coped extremely well with its transition from a nursery school and with further changes in services and provision over the past few years. There is no long term strategic plan in place, however, to guide the centre's work over the next three to five years.

### **Parents' and pupils' views of the school**

Parents are very pleased with the centre's work. They say that staff know their children very well indeed. They like the way their children's progress is carefully tracked. A few parents were concerned about provision in one class which has been disrupted by staff changes. Inspectors found that the situation is now stable and provision is good. Children are delighted to be at the centre. They come in keenly in the morning, excited about the new experiences each day brings.

### **Improvements needed**

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Ensure that all aspects of children's mathematical understanding are planned for and developed to the same high standard.
- Develop a long term strategic plan to guide the centre's work over the next three to five years.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Children's achievement is very good in all year groups. Most children are above the levels expected for their age when they transfer to Reception classes at other schools. Most are on track to exceed the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All children achieve very well, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.
- Achievement is very good overall but children could do even better in certain aspects of their mathematical development.

#### **Commentary**

1. Children begin at the centre at different ages having widely different levels of skill and experience. Those who enter the Foundation Stage at three years old and who have been in younger classes at the centre have already achieved well and are at levels which exceed those expected for their age. Those who start at the centre as three or four year olds begin at broadly expected levels for their age. Because of the excellent induction systems which the centre has developed, the children settle very quickly, no matter at what age they start. All quickly begin to learn and, by the time they leave the centre to transfer to Reception classes at other schools, many have already achieved the early learning goals: a year ahead of expectations.

2. Children with special educational needs make very good progress throughout the school. This is because staff know every child very well. They use this information judgement to adapt the activities that they encourage each child to do. The staff plan experiences for the children that are at an appropriate level to enable them to achieve very well in their learning.

3. Children who speak English as an additional language also make very good progress. By the time they have been at the centre for a comparatively short time, many have caught up in their communication skills, with their English-speaking peers. They continue to achieve well because of the well-targeted teaching they receive.

4. The centre has recently adapted its curriculum to accommodate new national requirements for children between birth and three years old. Staff are very well acquainted with the new requirements and have modified their planning accordingly. As a result, the children are catered for very effectively. Their individual needs are carefully considered and planned for during the daily activities. All achieve very well.

5. Children in the Foundation Stage classes also achieve very well. They make great strides in their personal, social and emotional development because of the strong emphasis on working and playing together. Most meet the early learning goals in this area of their development well ahead of their peers in other schools.

6. Very good achievement in communication, language and literacy means children soon become confident and fluent speakers and very good listeners. They enjoy stories, learn to recognise their names and begin to write a few letters. Children who are ready to develop their reading and writing skills further are given every opportunity to do so.

7. In their knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development, children achieve very well. This is because of the excellent range of interesting and stimulating



activities which the staff arrange for them. The resources both in the centre and in the surrounding area are used very effectively to widen children's knowledge of the world around them.

8. Achievement in mathematical development is good but it is not as high as in other areas of learning. Number and counting skills are very good but calculating and problem solving are not as well developed.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Children's attitudes to learning are excellent and they behave very well. The school makes excellent provision for their personal development. Attendance rates and punctuality are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children are extremely keen to learn and confidently join in the many exciting activities.
- Staff manage children skilfully and behaviour is very good.
- Relationships are very good and children are taught to be aware of others.
- The provision for developing children's cultural and spiritual awareness is excellent.
- Social development is very good overall, but more could be expected in some classes in terms of children tidying up at the end of the day.

### **Commentary**

9. By the time the four-year-olds leave the centre most are on track to exceed the early learning goals in their personal, social and emotional development. Children are eager to learn and quickly become confident learners, asking questions and enjoying the rich variety of opportunities available every day. They are keen to explore new experiences as well as enjoying familiar activities. The very youngest children are interested and intrigued by the toys and apparatus. Some of the babies were fascinated as they watched glittering shapes floating through bottles of water. Foundation Stage children eagerly examined the creatures they had found when they were pond dipping. Children quickly gain confidence in making choices and often play happily for long periods enjoying their chosen activity.

10. The atmosphere is calm and happy, and staff have consistently high expectations of good behaviour. Children respond very well to the skilful management, which is based on an excellent understanding of how young children develop. Adults know each child well as an individual, and they take time to explain right from wrong. The children are helped to understand that their actions have consequences. Good behaviour is praised and emphasised, and individual achievements are acknowledged. Children are encouraged from the earliest stages to take turns, to be aware of others and to play co-operatively. The quality of relationships is excellent, and the staff team offers the children excellent role models. Adults react quietly and calmly, they respect each child as an individual and develop caring relationships with them. As a result the children settle quickly, feel secure in approaching adults within the centre and develop good relationships with others.

11. The excellent provision for children's personal development underpins all activities. The children are able to look in wonder at the natural world for example, by watching their vegetables grow or by observing a frog in the pond. One child watched entranced, as water drained into the earth to "make the plants grow". During their many visits within the surrounding area they gain valuable first hand opportunities to wonder at the manufactured world. Experiences are both diverse and deeply fascinating for young children. From bus rides to a visit to the London Eye, children's imaginations are stimulated and extended. Children are introduced to a wide range of cultural traditions and beliefs. They celebrate major religious festivals such as Christmas and Diwali, and develop an early appreciation of the diversity and value of different traditions. The children are introduced to a wide range of cultural experiences, including music, art, poetry and stories.

12. Social development is very good overall. Children learn to co-operate in group and class activities as well as becoming confident enough to play independently. Activities, such as story time also promote a sense of being part of a group. Staff use snack times and meal times particularly effectively to promote social development and even the youngest children eat together. The children are used to visitors and react confidently when they meet people. In some classes, staff are very successful in encouraging children to help to tidy up activities at the end of sessions. This approach is not consistently good however, and too little is asked of some children in terms of helping to clear up.

13. Children with special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school and respond well to the opportunities offered. Most are keen learners. The ethos in the school offers children with special educational needs a secure and safe environment where their personal development flourishes. All staff work very effectively to encourage children with special needs to develop confidence and self esteem so that they feel a full part of the school community. The children form very constructive relationships with the adults who work with them.

14. Children who speak English as an additional language are encouraged and supported to make the most of all on offer at the centre. They are included in everything and good adult support helps them quickly develop their language skills. Other children are quick to care and include them in activities. They soon understand the routines and procedures of the centre and take every opportunity to explore and learn.

15. Children who have behavioural difficulties are managed well. They are constantly encouraged by all staff to behave appropriately and always praised when they do. This positive and consistent approach enables them to be fully included in all activities and ensures that the impact of their inappropriate behaviour on others is minimised and that they progress in their own learning.

## Attendance

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5	School data	1

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

16. Most children have very good records of attendance and are very happy to come to school. Breakfast sessions provide a comforting and a well-organised start to the day as well as reducing lateness and improving attitudes to learning. The calm routines established at the start of the day help children to part happily from parents and carers. The centre is heavily over-subscribed and parents accept that places may be withdrawn and re-allocated if they are not used fully. Consequently, most steer clear of taking their children out of school for long holidays or for reasons that could be avoided.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The centre provides a very good quality of education for its children. Teaching and learning are very good and the curriculum is excellent. Accommodation and resources are very good. Children are cared for very well and receive excellent support and guidance from adults. Partnerships with parents are excellent and there are very good links with other schools and the community generally.

## Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning throughout the centre is very good. It is very good for children under three and for those in the Foundation Stage. Assessment systems are excellent and mean

that the activities planned for children are really well matched to their needs and move them on in their learning very effectively.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children are engrossed by the activities on offer because they are really varied and interesting.
- The centre's very good range and quality of resources are used extremely well to illustrate different teaching points and help children learn effectively.
- Support staff are extremely well deployed and have a significant impact on the children's learning.
- Relationships are warm and friendly. Children feel safe, secure and valued. They want to learn.

### **Commentary**

#### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons***

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0(0%)	21(66%)	10(31%)	1(3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lesson; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

17. The key strength of the children's successful learning is in the quality of the assessment undertaken. Adults observe the children carefully at all times, noting down important aspects of their development as well as areas which they find difficult. These observations are shared between all members of the class team. Teachers' plans clearly show how these ongoing assessments inform subsequent planning. Consequently each child's learning is carefully planned for and monitored. Children receive the right sort of activities to help them develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. This applies to all aspects of their learning, from their personal and social development to language and literacy, creative and physical development. One child who, the previous week, had found it difficult to concentrate for any length of time was monitored closely by adults the subsequent week. They engaged him in a range of activities, asking questions to provoke his interest and help him to settle to the task. He chatted happily with adults and children around him and spent a considerable time working at the activity. Children who have already reached some aspects of the early learning goals for literacy are encouraged to try to make words out of the letters they already know. With sensitive support they are able to write a few recognisable words. This represents very good achievement for children who still have another year in Reception.

18. Children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are very well supported. Teachers and learning support assistants work in partnership very well and plan the experiences to be given to the children, together. They use what that they already know about each child to help them take the next step in their learning.

19. Children clearly enjoy coming to the centre. They arrive eagerly in the mornings, ready to take part in the excellent range of activities that teachers and other adults have organised. The activities follow topics which have been selected based upon the children's own developing interests. Activities are practical and involve children in learning through play. In this way, they learn for example, how to work co-operatively when they build a 'bus' from large wooden blocks. An adult is on hand to stimulate language development through role play as each child assumes the role of someone on the bus. They sing, 'The wheels on the bus go round and round,' as they sit happily in the passenger seats while the 'driver' describes the scenery. Cooking activities are always popular. Children enjoy decorating biscuits and preparing mid-morning snacks to share with their friends. They also learn how to share resources, take turns, chatting happily with one another while using new vocabulary suggested by the teacher. They learn to use simple tools and instruments correctly. Literacy skills are developed well through a good range of activities involving books and stories as well as role play activities where children 'write' prescriptions in the hospital or tickets for the train.

20. The centre's very good teaching resources are used very effectively. In the new 'baby room' for instance, purpose-built furniture helps small children learn to walk, by holding on and moving from table to chair and so on. Older children of one and two years of age play with musical instruments, learning about the sounds they make and the different ways to play them. Outdoor resources are used extremely well for physical activities and to develop children's personal and social skills, their communication and their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. The shrubs and bushes provide excellent opportunities for children to hunt for snails and bugs. They collect them very carefully, under adult supervision. The children observe the creatures, talking about their movements and what they might eat.

21. Strong and effective staff teams, led by teachers, ensure that the experiences offered to the children are well organised and successful in promoting learning. Adults work closely together, sharing ideas, setting up activities and monitoring and reviewing the children's progress. These effective partnerships are underpinned by excellent relationships. All members of the team are valued and each plays an important and valued part in the provision for children. The high priority placed on teamwork is the result of very good leadership and management from senior staff.

## **The curriculum**

The centre provides an excellent curriculum which is enriched by an outstanding variety of additional activities. The accommodation and resources are very good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Curriculum planning is very strong and based on excellent assessments of children's learning.
- The curriculum is highly stimulating and exciting and caters exceptionally well for all children.
- Provision for children with special educational needs is very good, and equality of access to the curriculum is excellent.
- An excellent variety of enrichment activities bring learning to life for the children.
- There is excellent provision for children outside the school day.
- The purpose-built accommodation is very good and there is an extensive range of equipment available to make learning fun.

## **Commentary**

22. The centre offers an extremely well-planned curriculum for all groups of children. The curriculum is securely based on a very good understanding of young children's development, and all the expected areas of learning are covered well. Planning is highly developed and is underpinned by excellent assessment procedures. Plans are constantly modified in the light of the daily observations of children's learning. Topics are developed and varied to cater for children's interests and enthusiasms. The staff's skilful planning and assessments ensure that all the expected areas of learning are catered for. Children's activities are tracked very carefully to ensure that all are experiencing a wide enough range to cater for all aspects of their learning.

23. Activities are lively, interesting and enjoyable and designed to promote purposeful play. In every class area, there is a very good balance of new and familiar activities, with a very good mixture of adult-led and child-initiated learning. The outdoor area is used extremely well. Planning for developing the children's knowledge and understanding of the world is excellent, and provides a very effective vehicle through which their language is developed.

24. Children follow a curriculum which is appropriate to their age. A new curriculum for children from birth to three years old has been recently introduced and is working extremely well. Babies in 'Blossom' class enjoy excellent provision. There are enough adults to give them the necessary attention, to take care of their physical needs as well as to stimulate their learning. Plans for each week are clearly displayed so that parents are aware of what their children will be doing. These very young children enjoy a wonderful range of experiences, from simply handling different objects, to

'posting' balls down a tube, to painting their first picture. Their progress is carefully monitored and reported to parents. Children in the classes for one- and two-year-olds also benefit from a really well-planned curriculum which helps them develop quickly in all areas of learning. They benefit greatly from one-to-one support from adults, which helps them especially in their language development.

25. Children in Foundation Stage classes follow the nationally recommended curriculum for their age. Adults do all they can to tailor the curriculum to the needs of the children. Their needs are very well met and their interests catered for effectively.

26. The curriculum for children with special educational needs is very good. The experiences they are given are linked to the targets in their individual education plans and designed to help them make good progress. Children who speak English as an additional language also have very full and rich learning experiences that enable them to make very good progress. All have equal access to the curriculum as they are so well supported by the highly skilled staff.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

27. Provision outside the normal school day is excellent. Children stay in the familiar surroundings of their class bases, and are cared for by the same staff. Planning for this time is both imaginative and thoughtful. The strong focus on children's personal, social emotional development is continued during meals and play.

28. The accommodation is very good, and is still being developed. A designated outside area for the 'baby room' is planned for the autumn, and a shaded sandpit for the older children is almost complete. Community provision is very good, and includes a welcoming Internet café as well as training and meeting rooms. Resources are very good. They are of good quality and contribute considerably to the rich experience available for the children.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The systems to ensure the care, welfare, health and safety of children are very good. Excellent account is taken of children's views and of their personal needs. Children's access to well-informed support and guidance is also excellent.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children trust the staff implicitly and enjoy first-class relationships with them.
- The support for children's personal needs is excellent.
- Children are always listened to and their comments are valued.
- The facilities and procedures for welfare and first aid are very good.

### **Commentary**

29. The staff are extremely skilled at listening, observing, planning and assessing what children do and where they need support to do better. Children's individual needs are identified clearly and the support they are given is reviewed regularly with their parents. The school has very close working links with the different agencies that support individual children, for example, speech therapists, occupational and physical therapists. Support from these agencies is offered on site, ensuring that parents and children get a very well co-ordinated service.

30. Staff in the baby room build very positive relationships with parents and show great sensitivity to their needs as well as those of the children. For example, staff alert parents to children on the verge of taking their first steps, making sure at the same time that they photograph the faltering ones for the family album. Adults exercise a very high degree of patience, kindness and goodwill in their dealings with the children. They employ a sophisticated range of persuasive and

supportive tactics that work extremely well in encouraging co-operation and participation in lessons and activities.

31. Health and safety procedures are comprehensive, fully documented and firmly embedded into school routines. For example, visitors know always to cover up or remove their shoes when visiting the baby room, in an effort to keep the 'crawling' areas germ and grit free. Children are constantly encouraged to know and understand about a healthy lifestyle. The staff make sure that children get enough opportunities to exercise and eat healthily by providing milk, water, fruit and well-balanced meals at regular intervals. Adults make excellent use of these and other occasions to encourage children to express their views and talk about things that are most relevant to them. They are highly skilled at incorporating children's comments into learning activities. At one mealtime, for example, children expressing a liking for potato pieces were encouraged to estimate how many more they might be able to eat. Excellent use is made of child-initiated activities to develop their concentration and skills of enquiry.

32. First aid procedures work very well. Children are confident and reassured by the presence of highly trained staff who deal calmly with their minor accidents and injuries and know exactly what to do in the event of a more serious injury. The school's child protection procedures are good and well-known to staff who are aware of the likely indications of a child failing to thrive. The staff have a good understanding about their responsibilities towards children at risk and 'looked-after' children and are eager to extend their knowledge. Plans are in place for key staff, currently being trained in this important area, to pass on their knowledge to all adults in school who are in regular contact with the children, including the support and office staff.

33. The school views all incidents of racism or bullying type behaviour by anyone in school as reportable incidents and, by monitoring these, staff and governors work to eliminate intolerance. In doing so, they create a secure place to learn that positively embraces all children and their parents and visitors.

34. Children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language are very well cared for. All are carefully assessed and observed to monitor their progress and to ensure that they are achieving as well as possible. Liaison with outside agencies is very good and the school makes great efforts to ensure that children receive as high a level of care as possible. The children in the school with a statement of special educational need receive their full entitlement.

## **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The partnership between the school and parents is excellent. The school works very effectively with other schools and community groups in establishing a network of local support for children and families.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents receive excellent information about the school and their children's progress.
- Parents' views are welcomed and highly valued by all staff.
- The very good integration of services is creating a centre of support for the community.

## **Commentary**

35. A high number of parents made it known right from the start of the inspection that they are very happy with the school and the education it provides. They struggled to find anything to say about what might need improvement. They feel their children are well cared for in school and treated very fairly. Parents are also pleased that their views are taken seriously by staff who listen to them and then deal efficiently with their concerns. The inspection evidence supports the strength of their praise.

36. Parents are very impressed by the comprehensive knowledge teachers have of their children as individuals and are therefore openly receptive to the feedback they get on their children's achievements. Any doubts or worries parents might have are set aside in a climate of trust that is built up from the first contact they have with the school. First experiences of school for parents and children are planned carefully. Home visits form an integral part of the process and promote a relaxed and purposeful partnership. Routines, once established, are maintained throughout the school and this ensures that children's experiences are consistent and they feel happy and relaxed.

37. Parents of children with special needs are given very good advice on the support systems available to them and their children. This sensitive approach ensures the school enlists the co-operation of parents in providing a very high standard of care for all children including those who have special educational or specific medical needs. The centre involves them fully in the programme for working with their child's needs so that they can further support their learning at home. Parents with children who speak English as an additional language are involved in their child's learning well and are often asked for advice to help staff support their children more effectively.

38. Much useful information is provided to help parents understand how they can work with the school and support their children's learning at home. Newsletters illustrate easy ways for parents to help children acquire basic literacy, numeracy and scientific skills as they go about their daily routines. Parents are valued for the skills they offer. For example, one group of volunteers made the story sacks used in story-telling sessions. Others have added photos and adventure stories to the diary of 'Pudgy Wudgy Bear' after the teddy has stayed a week with their family.

39. Very good support services are in operation. Speech and language therapists, physical and occupational therapists as well as the educational psychology service use the centre to meet and work with parents and staff to help their child. Plans are well ahead for the centre's inter-agency support services to be extended to more closely meet the needs of the community. As a result, there will be services related to employment, debt counselling and drug dependency.

40. Staff are fully involved in developing the co-ordinated use of the building. Many local organisations and children's services organisations use rooms for training and development work. The centre includes an Internet café which is used throughout the day as an informal meeting place for parents, staff and the public. Links with local schools and nurseries are reciprocal and strong. Because the centre is used as a training venue, staff often meet with other early years practitioners to share ideas and good practice. The many visitors to the centre also include trainee teachers and college students, valued for the assistance they give in classes. The school takes advantage of the very good partnership it has with neighbouring schools to help children transfer smoothly to the next stage of their education. Very good summaries and forecasts of children's achievements enable everyone, including parents, to take stock of the stage children are at before they move on. Some parents have added a few lines to the records to express their thoughts and feelings as their child leaves the school. Typical of these reads... *'Thank you so much. My child has had such a wonderful time and we are so very grateful to all the staff for making it such a happy experience.'*

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The quality of leadership and management is very good. Leadership is very effective and management systems very successful. Governance is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership and drive to the centre's work.
- Senior staff are very effective. They support the headteacher very well and take key roles in the centre's work and development.
- Governors carry out their roles and responsibilities very successfully. They support the work of the centre very effectively and have a strong influence on its development.

- There is a firm commitment to inclusion. All children are valued highly and their individual needs catered for.
- A strong emphasis is attached to the professional development of staff. This ensures that adults continue to improve their own skills, resulting in high quality provision for the children in their care.
- Improvement in the short term is planned for carefully but the centre has not yet developed a longer term strategic plan to guide its development over the next few years.

## Commentary

41. The centre is extremely well led and managed by the headteacher. Provision has improved significantly since it was last inspected as a nursery school five years ago. The changes imposed both locally and nationally have added to the challenges faced by the centre but these have been managed extremely well, with no decline in standards or provision. For example, the centre has recently had to modify the curriculum to cope with new legislation for those children between birth and three years old. The accommodation has had to be modified to cater for babies between three months and a year old. Provision for these children has had to be determined from scratch. These changes have been made swiftly and successfully because of the expertise and commitment of senior managers, governors and the headteacher. They have worked very effectively as a team to ensure a planned, cohesive programme which has not adversely affected the care and education of those children already at the centre.

42. Senior staff provide very good support to the headteacher. Each has a clear role which is carried out very successfully and also work very effectively with the headteacher as a team to share information, good practice and fresh ideas. It is this strong commitment to teamwork which is at the heart of the centre's success. In turn, the senior staff create strong and cohesive teams amongst the rest of the staff. Year teams and class teams work very well together and this results in very good provision for the children. Adults respect one another. All views are valued and considered.

43. The centre places a high priority on professional development. Virtually all adults, teachers and support staff are involved in furthering their professional skills through training and development work. Nearly all of this is funded through the centre. Several teaching and support staff are involved in studying for first or second degrees. Some support staff intend to go on to train to become teachers. Other support staff are studying for national vocational qualifications to improve their skills and knowledge. Staff value these opportunities highly and are committed towards providing the very best they can for the children in their care.

44. The provision for children with special educational needs is effectively and thoughtfully managed. Administration is efficient and up-to-date. Liaison with outside agencies is very good. Tracking the progress of every child through careful assessment, observation and discussion with staff ensures that they are meeting their targets. Professional development in special educational needs is very good as many staff are involved formally and informally in learning more about meeting complex medical and learning needs. Statutory requirements are fully met. Provision for children who speak English as an additional language is managed extremely well by the headteacher with the support of the local education authority.

45. The governing body has only recently become a statutory body. Despite this, governors are carrying out their responsibilities very well. They visit regularly to monitor the centre's work and this information is shared between governors. In this way they are developing a very clear knowledge of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. They are able to take a key role in planning for the future. Individual governors have very good skills, for example in financial planning, curriculum development and personnel and development work. These skills are used very well to support the work of the centre. The centre has only taken full control of its budget this year but already there are clear systems and guidelines to ensure that financial procedures are sound and that the centre gains the best value it can for its money.



46. Improvement planning has been hindered by the number of locally and nationally imposed changes with which the centre has had to cope. This has restricted the development of a long term strategic plan to guide the centre's work over the next three to five years.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Assessment procedures are excellent.
- The curriculum is extremely varied and interesting and means that children show high levels of interest in their learning.

#### **Commentary**

47. The centre has improved its provision for the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning are very well planned and take full account of all children's needs. Children enter the Foundation Stage classes having already enjoyed very good provision in younger classes. Most are already at levels which exceed those expected for their age. They continue to achieve very well and, by the time they leave the centre, most will already have met or exceeded the early learning goals in all the areas of learning. Children with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs achieve very well. There is a very good range of resources and teachers provide very good opportunities to develop children's learning in all areas.

48. Support staff make an excellent contribution to children's learning. They are extremely well directed and have very good knowledge themselves about how young children learn. This enables them to provide excellent role models for children and engage purposefully with them to help them learn. There is an excellent team spirit between the staff who share common goals and purposes. This ensures a consistent approach enabling all children to make equal progress.

49. Assessment procedures are outstanding and provide clear information which adults use to plan suitable activities for different children. Careful records are kept of individual progress.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is consistently very good, enabling children to achieve very well.
- Activities are very well planned and children become confident learners.
- Staff provide very good role models for the children, and relationships are very good.
- Children have very good opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures.
- Not all classes are encouraged to help tidy up at the end of the day.

#### **Commentary**

50. Children achieve very well in this aspect. Most are on track to exceed the expected standards by the time they reach the end of the Foundation Stage. Teaching in this area of learning is very good. The consistent approach taken by adults ensures that children know exactly what is expected. Staff share very high expectations of the children and have an excellent knowledge of each child which stems from direct observations. All staff have a very good knowledge of how young children learn and they are very sensitive to individual needs. Information about the children is shared daily. Children know they are valued and that they will be treated fairly. The occasional conflict is sorted out very quickly, and staff are very careful to ensure that children understand the

effect their actions have on others. Such conflicts are rare because the activities are so interesting and well planned and children are engrossed in their learning. Behaviour is very good. Children with special needs are supported very well, and activities are often modified to cater for their specific needs.

51. Children rapidly become confident in working indoors and in the exciting outdoor area. They have excellent opportunities to make independent choices and to initiate their own learning. Most do so confidently, and the atmosphere is usually busy and purposeful. The rich curriculum stimulates children's curiosity and gives them constant opportunities to discuss their experiences with adults and other children. Activities are very carefully balanced, to include those where children work alongside adults and others which they might start exploring alone. Children are given time to consolidate and enjoy familiar activities as well as exploring new experiences. Levels of concentration are high. One three-year-old spent over half an hour happily absorbed in watering the vegetables. Older children listened quietly and attentively to stories and answered questions confidently.

52. Children develop great independence in their learning. They choose confidently from the range of activities available. Not all classes are encouraged, however, to help with the tidying up process at the end of the day and this inhibits their social development.

53. Relationships are very good. Staff provide excellent role models, in terms of teamwork and in their relationships with others. All staff speak calmly and positively to children, listen to what others have to say, and provide children with a warm and encouraging response. As a result, children feel secure and happy, and glow in the frequent and well-deserved praise. Staff plan very good opportunities for children to experience aspects of different cultures. Visitors from different cultural groups for example, African drummers and Irish dancers, widen children's experience. Similarly celebrations of religious and cultural festivals encourage respect for different beliefs.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Provision for communication, language and literacy is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is very good and children of all abilities achieve well.
- Children become confident speakers and listeners.
- Early reading skills are developed well and children enjoy books and stories.
- There is not enough emphasis on developing correct letter formation among the older children.

### **Commentary**

54. Children start in the nursery classes with a very wide range of ability. Almost all are on track to exceed some of the early learning goals in this area of learning, and at least meet all the others by the end of the Foundation Stage. Speaking and listening skills are particularly strong and children are achieving well. Staff plan a stimulating range of activities which children are eager to enjoy and to share. Teachers and early years' assistants are skilful in engaging children in conversation and take every opportunity to do so. They introduce and emphasise new vocabulary and listen carefully to children as they talk about their activities. Children are confident that they will be listened to and communicate their feelings with increasing skill. They know that their ideas will be valued. Two higher attaining children, for example, conducted a lengthy discussion with an adult about turtles. Good questioning ensured that their ideas and thinking skills were extended well. Younger children enjoy repetitive language, as they describe what they are doing. "Mine is the tallest tower. I'll knock, knock, knock it down." Older children become more descriptive, "In the pond there's some really disgusting green stuff," said one boy. Children are encouraged to use correct vocabulary, such as, 'lily pad', 'pond weed' and to use reference books to find out about the creatures they find.

55. Reading skills are developed well. Children enjoy sharing books with adults and listen well to taped stories. During more formal group sessions they learn to listen attentively to stories. Teachers develop children's understanding of books well, talking about authors and illustrators. They read expressively and children listen carefully. They can answer questions about the events and characters and enjoy the humour in some stories. Teachers use very good strategies for maintaining children's interest in stories, for example by developing role-play associated with the story. Almost all children recognise their names, and label their mid-session drinks each day. Children increasingly recognise letter sounds and shapes. They begin to recognise some familiar words and are aware of conventional elements in stories.

56. Teachers plan many opportunities for children to develop early writing skills as a natural part of other activities. Children draw and write labels, record their experiences and write their names on their paintings and artwork. The school has successfully tackled the issues from the previous inspection relating to providing opportunities for writing. Older and more able children are encouraged to use their knowledge of sounds when they write. During one session, children made books about themselves. With encouragement they attempted to write words such as "ate" and "paper". The centre has begun to develop a handwriting policy to introduce a consistent style, which will link with those used in the Reception classes to which children will transfer. There is scope for staff to pay more attention to correct formation when children start to write letter shapes.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for mathematical development is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children make good progress and achieve well.
- Adults use every opportunity to develop the children's counting skills but they do not routinely intervene as effectively to extend children's knowledge in other areas of mathematics.
- There are well-planned opportunities for children to develop mathematical understanding.

### **Commentary**

57. Children enter the nursery with a very wide range of mathematical skills but overall they are at broadly expected levels for their age. Children who begin at the centre before they are four-years-old have a very good grounding and make particularly good progress. However, all achieve well and many are on track to reach the early learning goals by the time they transfer to Reception classes in other schools, a year ahead of expectations. This is true in the areas of number and counting, and in aspects of shape, space and measure. Children readily count and the oldest can count reliably to 10 and many to well beyond. They recognise familiar two-dimensional shapes and understand mathematical language, such as smaller and taller. Children looking at the bean seeds they had planted in the garden were excitedly discussing how much taller they had become.

58. The aspects of mathematics that are less well developed are mathematical problem solving and aspects of calculating. The work to help them take the next steps in these aspects of their mathematical learning is not as well planned as in other areas.

59. Teaching is good and activities well planned to give children a rich and interesting mathematical experience. Equipment and apparatus are of very good quality and are varied and interesting. Children loved labelling the bikes and other equipment with the number labels they had to play with and showed they could read them and put them into sequence. Activities are well chosen to appeal to the children and encourage their participation. Children loved taking part in making the apple crumble which gave them opportunities to weigh and measure ingredients. They plant seeds and watch and measure the plants as they grow. Children are provided with a wide variety of first-hand experiences to experiment with capacity, sorting and pattern. Adults grasp many

opportunities to develop children's mathematical skills, through songs, rhymes and games. In one session the children happily sang about and counted the five little bears on a wall. In the best teaching, adults question children well to develop their mathematical understanding but some occasions to develop calculating or problem solving, practically, are missed.

60. Relationships are extremely good between the children and adults and this places adults in a very good position to model mathematical language and encourage the children's thinking. The centre brings in visitors and uses trips out to enrich mathematics curriculum. For example, parents come in regularly to work with children playing mathematical games. These include board games where, for example, children earn pennies to buy a dinosaur. Children enjoy these tremendously; and as they play, develop a good understanding of money and practise their counting skills.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children are excited by the wide range of opportunities on offer in and out of the classroom.
- Opportunities are planned very carefully to ensure all aspects of this area of learning are covered.
- This area of learning is used very successfully as a vehicle to develop communication skills.
- Adults contribute significantly to children's learning about the world around them as they ask questions and encourage children to think about what they are doing.
- Although some aspects of information and communication technology are used successfully, the use of computers is not promoted as much as it might be.

### **Commentary**

61. By the time they leave the centre, most children exceed the standards expected of them in this area of their learning. Their achievement is very good. They are well on track to exceed the early learning goals by the time they transfer to Reception classes at other schools.

62. This area of learning has always had a high profile in the school. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers and support staff are skilled at planning and organising a wide range of very stimulating and exciting activities. These are set up inside and outside the classroom and children move freely between activities, choosing for themselves as well as receiving targeted teaching from adults. Children experiment with different materials and how to fix them together when they make simple puppets. Adults encourage the children to give them names and describe their attributes and characters. An excited group of children searched for insects and beetles amongst the undergrowth in the garden. They found snails which they transported very carefully back to the classroom where they examined them under magnifying glasses. The assistant encouraged them to observe and describe the snails' behaviour. In these ways, the children's communication skills are developed very successfully and their vocabulary is increased.

63. Sweet peas and vegetables are planted in the garden and children talk knowledgeably about the roots and the leaves. Many know that they need water and sunshine in order to grow. Children develop their knowledge and understanding of different cultures and beliefs when they describe family events such as baptisms and birthdays and take part in different cultural celebrations such as Chinese New Year. They gain a very good understanding of time and place through the excellent range of visits and visitors to the school. A recent visit to the Woolwich Transport Museum, for example, involved travelling on a bus and ferry, then having an imaginary ride on an old-fashioned train.

64. The centre is aware of the need to extend the use of information and communication technology within all aspects of the children's learning. There are clear plans to do so and these are

beginning to be put into place. A new co-ordinator has been appointed to oversee this area of development.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for physical development is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good provision, especially teaching, helps all children to develop very good skills.
- The wide range of resources develops the children's co-ordination, control and mobility, inside and outside.

### Commentary

65. Some children have been at the centre before becoming three years old and they have an extremely strong foundation in physical development. Most children develop very good physical skills and, by the time they leave the centre many have achieved the early learning goals ahead of expectations. They can climb, run and jump safely. They take good care of others when moving around. The outside area is used very well to provide opportunities for running, riding bikes, pushing wheeled toys and playing with balls and bats of different sizes. Children make full use of the equipment and develop good co-ordination and control. They persist at an activity which helps them to improve. Two boys spent a considerable amount of time trying to use their racquets to pass a ball between each other; much of the time was spent in retrieving the ball after a mis-directed shot. However, their persistence paid off and they increased their skill, so that by the end they were able to more accurately direct the ball to one another.

66. Teaching is very good. The indoor and outside environments are planned very thoroughly to help children develop their physical skill. Good quality fixed and movable equipment encourages activity and adults persuade children to take part in vigorous physical activity. Adults give very good support to ensure children are safe and develop their skills, but challenge them rather than cosset them. Children climbed through, over and under the good quality climbing equipment and invented different ways of coming down the slide to the delight of one and all. Adults use praise very well to encourage less confident or less active children to learn new physical skills. They keep an eye on individuals to ensure everyone takes part in appropriate activity, no child is allowed to miss out.

67. Children develop their more precise manipulative skills such as cutting, drawing, modelling and painting and by using small construction equipment well because adults involve them in a good range of interesting activities.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults plan a very good and imaginative range of creative activities for the children.
- Adults intervene very well to encourage the children's experimentation and imagination.

### Commentary

68. Opportunities for creative development are broad and varied. Children make very good progress and achieve very well. By the time children finish at the centre many children have achieved the early learning goals in creative development.

69. Singing is an important activity in the centre. There are many opportunities for children to sing, which they do enthusiastically and tunefully. They give good attention to rhythm and can clap in time, performing the actions accurately. Children have a very good repertoire of songs and can remember the words of many; including some they have not sung for a few weeks. Musical

instruments are available so that the children can experiment. They do this with great pleasure. The sound of a large cymbal suspended outside could be heard ringing out regularly throughout the day.

70. Children produce lively and colourful paintings. They are very good at recording events and ideas with drawings. They mix paint with their hands and make hand prints. They stick and make with a wide range of attractive collage materials. Children are very keen to take part in role-play and a very good range of scenarios are provided, from hospitals to offices to home corners. They are also encouraged to invent stories of their own. One girl told a long and complicated story about how she would climb a Christmas tree to reach the giant's pink castle to retrieve the food he had stolen from her mother. With careful and skilful questioning from the adult listening, the story developed and became a fascinating tale.

71. Teaching and learning are very good. Children achieve very well in a range of creative activities because staff plan such good opportunities. They lead and support the children's own chosen activities skilfully. Staff also allow children to work independently when appropriate. Very good quality dressing up clothes encourage children to develop their creative skills or imagination. Throughout their time in the centre they make significant progress in their creativity because they have such a wide range of experiences in art, music, dance and role-play. Children are taken out of the centre on visits and a good range of visitors including African drummers and theatre groups broaden their creative experience.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>1</b>
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>1</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	1
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	1
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*