



Acacia Nursery

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103030
LEA Waltham Forest LEA
Inspection number 276811
Inspection dates 3 July 2006 to 4 July 2006
Reporting inspector Sean O'Toole AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Cecil Road
School category	Community		Leytonstone
Age range of pupils	3 to 4		London E11 3HF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02085584444
Number on roll	103	Fax number	00
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Julius Olu
Date of previous inspection	18 October 1999	Headteacher	Ms Rosemary Buckland

Age group 3 to 4	Inspection dates 3 July 2006 - 4 July 2006	Inspection number 276811
----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Acacia Children's Centre is in an area of significant deprivation with much temporary housing and high mobility. It works closely with Sure Start and other agencies. The children come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. A quarter speak English as an additional language and one in ten is at an early stage of learning English. A small percentage has learning difficulties and disabilities. Most children start shortly after their third birthday and an increasing number have benefited from pre-school childcare at the centre. Almost all have low levels of attainment on admission, especially in communication, language and literacy.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

When asked what he liked about coming to school, one boy said, 'Everything, especially playing with all my friends.' Parents echoed these sentiments and described the school as, 'A happy place where staff care about the children.' The headteacher and staff have shown their good capacity to improve having coped successfully with the substantial changes of becoming a children's centre and dealt with issues from the previous inspection. The school rightly judges that it provides a good quality of education.

Children achieve well. They make very good gains in their personal, social and emotional development and this is reflected in their good behaviour, friendly relationships and willingness to learn. By the time they leave the school, they are working at levels that are appropriate for their age. Teaching is good and especially so for those with statements of special educational need. The staff regularly record the children's achievements but assessment is not used effectively enough to identify the next steps in learning, especially in setting challenges for the more able. The mostly good curriculum includes effective guidance on fun-filled activities but planning does not focus sufficiently on identifying the skills to be taught and hampers some aspects of progress.

Leadership and management are good and the headteacher has successfully led the staff through challenging times. They are an effective team, committed to school improvement and the welfare of the children. The school provides good value for money. Governors are strong advocates of the school but they are not robust enough in checking on long-term planning which is more a list of things to do than targets to achieve.

What the school should do to improve further

- * Sharpen up assessment to enable staff to set challenging work especially for the brighter children.
- * Plan the curriculum more thoroughly to provide guidance for staff on which skills are to be taught.
- * Make long-term planning sharply focused and ensure that governors take a fuller part in checking on how well the school is doing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most children start school with skills and knowledge that are low for their age. Boys and girls make good progress and their achievement is good. By the time they leave the school, they are working at levels which are in line with those expected for their age. They make very good headway in personal, social and emotional development showing tenacity, perseverance and very positive attitudes to learning. They have a

secure grasp of basic skills in reading and writing. Most hold an interesting conversation, as they have benefited from good opportunities to extend their vocabulary through role play. There are some gaps in their mathematical development, relating to number, as this aspect does not feature strongly in the school's planning. This particularly affects the progress of more able who should achieve even better. Very good teaching of creative skills enables the children to produce good quality artwork.

Those with statements of special educational need and with learning difficulties achieve very well because work is matched accurately to their needs and staff are creative in finding ways to reinforce understanding. Children from minority ethnic groups work hard and achieve well. Those with little English when starting school soon learn to communicate adequately.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show a good awareness of the needs of others and behave with kindness and consideration especially towards those with learning difficulties. They mix well and show respect for different beliefs and cultures, and participate enthusiastically in community events, such as the Leytonstone Festival, and fund raising for charities. It is obvious from the way that they settle quickly when coming into the Nursery that the children enjoy learning. Some even want to be there at weekends. 'My child has tantrums on Saturday and Sunday because she can't come to nursery,' said one parent.

The children stick at tasks and are very keen to show what they have done. Attendance is satisfactory. They know much about healthy living and take part eagerly in outdoor activities as well as enjoying fruit and water. As one parent wrote, 'I can see a huge, positive improvement in her behaviour and her eating.' Boys and girls play happily together and make safe use of the tools, equipment and resources. When riding bikes and running around, they are careful to avoid collisions and respect each other's space. They develop good skills in using their initiative and cooperating on activities. These attributes, linked to their good progress in basic skills, prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff understand how young children learn and plan activities which motivate and take account of their differing backgrounds and skills. This is especially the case in setting work for, and supporting those with significant learning difficulties. Those at an early stage of learning English also make good gains in learning because of the use of sign language and, where possible, their home language. Children from all backgrounds are very responsive and have a thirst for learning because staff use lots of praise to encourage them to have a go.

Each session includes a wide variety of opportunities for the children to explore and investigate and those that are supported by adults are especially successful in moving learning on at a good pace. In one creative activity the children made puppets, discussed the different body parts and took delight in adding details such as matching clothes to the colour of their puppets' eyes. Another success is the use of role play both inside and outdoors, during which the children dress up as characters from well known stories and act out their part. This work contributes much to the children's grasp of English.

Staff keep a check on the children's progress and make detailed observations which are included in well presented profile books. However, there is insufficient information to pinpoint exactly at which levels the children are working. As a result, the planning does not take enough account of the range of skills that individuals have already acquired, especially the more able, to guide staff on the next steps in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Children benefit from a good curriculum which is relevant and meets their diverse needs. According to a parent, 'Staff make learning fun; (my child) is learning new things all the time. She is constantly coming home singing nursery rhymes.' Planning gives the children an interesting mix of practical and physical activities which contribute well to their collaborative and independent skills. However, planning does not clearly identify the skills to be taught and how they might be extended to challenge the different ability groups.

The curriculum is enriched with a good range of visits, visitors and special events which help the children to appreciate and contribute to the world around them. Children thrive on the opportunities for outdoor play. Staff use these times to enhance the children's early reading and writing skills; in an activity in the sandpit, the children took part in an archaeological dig and then used reference books to find the dinosaurs' names.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'Nothing is too much trouble; the staff really know the children and understand what they need.' These words from a parent sum up the school's successful provision for care and support. The interests and well-being of the children lie at the heart of the school's ethos. Highly competent provision for those with statements of special educational need illustrate the staff's commitment to including and supporting everyone. Robust procedures for child protection, risk assessment and the appointment of staff ensure children are safe and secure. Staff know the children well and keep good records of their achievement although there is a lack of detail in assessing the children's work and using the information to set new challenges.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The dedicated headteacher takes a good lead in ensuring that the academic and pastoral needs of all children are met. Leadership and management are good and parents praise the commitment and hard work of all. One said, 'They are always available and take a real interest in my child and the rest of the family.' These positive attributes underpin the good leadership of the provision for those with learning difficulties. Staff willingly learn new skills and are well motivated in seeking ways of improving the provision.

The staff accurately describe the school's effectiveness as good. Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled and the transition to a children's centre has been managed well, illustrating the school's good capacity for improvement. Due to the reorganisation and building work the school held a large surplus of funds; spending is now on track.

The governors are very supportive although there are few systems in place for them to track the school's performance. Long-term plans are rather vague, referring mainly to administrative and management matters rather than providing a sharp focus on raising standards. The staff show a willingness to be self critical and are not afraid to recognise any shortcomings. The completion of some aspects of the Quality in Learning and Teaching Project has highlighted some gaps in the curriculum and assessment, and plans are in hand to deal with them. This process of review has also involved sampling and taking account of the views of parents and children.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	NA
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Children

Thank you for helping me on my recent visit to your school. I enjoyed watching you at work, especially helping you to draw and write using magic paper. When you spoke to me I could see how much you enjoy learning. Along with your mums and dads, I think that you go to a good school.

There are several things that I liked about your school.:) The staff really care about you and help you to learn.:) You work hard and are good at paying attention and listening.:) You seem to be kind to everyone and get on well together.:) The adults are very good at helping children who find work difficult.:) You have lots of interesting activities and you concentrate on them for a long time.

I have asked the teachers to get even better at planning activities to help you to improve your skills and to find ways of checking on how well you are learning. I have also asked the governors to be more involved in helping the school to plan more improvements. I hope that you continue to enjoy being at school and that when you move on you will be as happy as you are at Acacia.

Yours truly,

Sean O'Toole

Lead Inspector