

North Islington Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100386
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	285784
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Sean O'Toole

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	0–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr N Charlesworth
Headteacher	Mr I Senior
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2001
School address	110 Tollington Park London N4 3RB
Telephone number	020 7272 5045
Fax number	020 7272 8517

Age group	0–5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is located in an area of high socio-economic deprivation. Almost a quarter of the places it offers are for children with social, personal or educational needs. Eight children have severe and complex needs. The school provides extended day care and is open for 48 weeks a year. Currently there are 32 languages spoken in the school and, on starting, a high proportion speak little or no English. The school provides highly flexible arrangements to meet the diverse needs of the families. It was included in Ofsted's list of high achieving schools in 2005. The school is in the process of transition to become a children's centre and this will require substantial building work.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'We are very pleased at the way our daughter is treated as an individual and the way that the school is flexible in accommodating her interests.' Comments like this from many parents are a clear illustration of how well the staff provide high levels of care and promote children's excellent personal development. This is a good school with several outstanding features which contribute much to children's happiness and academic development. Every child, regardless of ability or background, is nurtured with the result that they thrive in a safe, stimulating and challenging environment. Children make excellent progress in developing personal qualities and contribute much to the school community. They look after each other, play safely and know how to keep themselves fit and healthy. Many make firm and lasting friendships. As one girl said, 'I love school. I have lots of friends and always feel happy'.

One of the reasons for the school's success is the exceptional link between the provision for under-threes with the main school. The excellent system of tracking also contributes to seamless transition between the different parts of the school and enables staff to build on what has already been learned. Most of the children start the main school with skills which are below those expected for their age. They make a cracking start, benefiting from an excellent curriculum which inspires and enthuses them. As a result, by the time they leave the school they are confident learners who willingly have a go at challenging activities. As one parent wrote, 'I am especially pleased that my child gets to learn how to be independent'. Most reach the standards expected for their age in the areas of learning and the more able are working at advanced levels. Because they achieve well, all are prepared thoroughly for the next stage of education.

Staff are an effective team who plan activities thoughtfully and use the children's ideas and enthusiasms to enhance learning. Teaching and learning are good and include some outstanding features especially in making use of the outdoor area and in matching work to the needs of vulnerable children. Staff skilfully draw the children into activities and make excellent use of resources to help them to concentrate. Sometimes they do too much and tend to answer questions for the children rather than giving them opportunities to think, respond and extend their vocabulary. Conversely, excellent attention is given to those who are new to speaking English so that they quickly grasp new words and participate fully in the Nursery's activities.

Leadership and management are good and the headteacher inspires his staff and expects much from them. This team are highly critical of their work and accurately evaluate what they do. This approach provides the springboard for action and has resulted in improvements since the previous inspection in mathematical development and boys' writing. Monitoring has brought greater consistency but senior staff are not sufficiently involved in setting focused targets to help colleagues to improve. Governors keep a check on the school's work and with the staff have developed imaginative plans for the development of the children's centre. The school is in an excellent position to build on its strengths.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of challenging and open ended questions to stimulate the children's thinking and speaking skills.
- Extend the monitoring of teaching by senior staff and set more focused targets to support the development of the staff's skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

This is a school which quickly identifies the personal and learning needs of the children and which successfully involves parents in every step of their children's development. Most children start school with significant gaps in their understanding and a significant proportion have specific needs. All of them benefit from individual attention which enables them to achieve well in all of the areas of learning. By the time they leave the school, most are working at the levels expected for their age. The more able boys and girls are particularly successful. The children's personal, social and emotional development is advanced for their age. They are confident learners who willingly have a go at new activities. Language skills improve rapidly especially for those new to speaking English. Vulnerable groups are supported exceptionally well. They thrive, meet their very specific targets and make excellent progress. On some occasions children's language skills could be extended by the more effective use of questions by adults. Mathematical skills have improved much since the previous inspection and children competently add, sort and match numbers. Their physical development is very good because the outdoor activities are challenging and opportunities to learn to dance enhance agility and creativity.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Each day the children rush into school, eagerly anticipating the joy of learning. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have a love of finding out about the wonders of nature, visiting galleries, exhibitions and buildings to find out about humankind's achievement. They enthusiastically celebrate the festivals of the different nationalities found in the community. The children love learning, are highly motivated and work together exceptionally well. Their behaviour is excellent, they care for one another, take responsibility for their own learning and are always willing helpers. At lunchtime they eat heartily, enjoying the healthy meals. Children say they love coming to school and they also develop an excellent awareness of being a part of the wider community through the frequent visits to central London. Through such visits they know how to keep safe on the roads. They are good at working together and share toys and take turns on equipment. They like listening to adults and are also good at understanding the needs and views of other children. These, together with their secure grasp of basic skills, equip them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Sessions are planned thoroughly taking account of the children's needs and abilities. Staff are good listeners and take account of the children's interests and suggestions when planning activities. They know much about how young children learn and because they use assessments exceptionally well make sure that work is challenging and pitched at the children's levels. Children are good learners who like to make choices and staff carefully channel these enthusiasms so that children improve rapidly. There is a good balance between the direct teaching of skills, opportunities for the children to learn independently and the provision of individual or group support. Sometimes staff tend to overdirect the children and answer for them and this hampers the extension of some children's speaking skills. Conversely, in an

outstanding session, the teacher involved the children in searching for minibeats, provided them with cameras and magnifiers and allowed them the time to describe in detail the creatures they were observing. As one parent said, 'We have great confidence in the teachers who are consistently energetic and imaginative in their approach'. A particular strength is the way that the development of basic skills is linked to all areas of learning. Through this strategy staff successfully engage the children and make learning relevant and fun.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum is enriched with a wealth of activities which substantially enhance learning. Underpinning the planning is an awareness of the children's pastoral as well as academic needs. Learning is practical and interesting so that children of all abilities can grasp new ideas. The excellent provision for those with learning and other needs ensures that all enjoy what is on offer and, wherever possible, join in with other children. Play is at the heart of the learning and staff are quick to adapt activities in response to the children's ideas. The school makes excellent use of the local community and parents to support its work. The dance classes are thoroughly enjoyed by all and give much confidence to vulnerable children and help those new to English to learn through actions and songs. Ever conscious of the disadvantages of some children, the school provides extended care of high quality. It also has a regular programme of visits which include Tate Modern, the British Museum, The Emirates stadium and the theatre. These opportunities greatly enhance learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

One parent said, 'The staff here are such a wonderful group, really positive and caring. They get to know your child and really help their learning'. The school provides outstanding care, support and guidance. Through careful observations the staff build up a picture of every child's progress and use the information to plan the next steps in learning. They make sure that parents are involved throughout and this is highly appreciated by them. One wrote, 'The profile books are so lovely, keeping pictures and descriptions of the children's development'. Staff are also highly skilled in supporting children with learning difficulties and complex needs. Additional support for those new to learning English enables them to join in all of the activities. Staff are vigilant in checking on the children's health and well-being and draw much on the expertise of the under-threes' coordinator for advice. Staff create an environment where children feel safe and secure. They encourage adventure and provide challenges whilst making sure that all risks are covered. There are robust procedures for child protection and safeguarding children and parents express much confidence that their children are well looked after. Summing it up, one wrote, 'I couldn't think of a better environment I would rather have for my child'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the school provides high quality care and is ably supported by senior staff and the governors. Parents express much satisfaction with the work of the school and the way in which it keeps them informed of changes and the progress of their children. It is clear from the exceptional links forged with the under-threes' provision

and outside agencies that the school is well prepared for the change to a children's centre and that the children will continue to be at the heart of the school's work.

The headteacher makes good use of the staff's gifts and talents. Staff work as a team and play a full part in decision making, although their role in monitoring teaching is weak. Strategic plans clearly identify the next steps and the governors' involvement is good. The governors keep a check on how well the school is working and are involved well in the process of self-evaluation. The school has accurately identified its strengths and areas for development and there is no sense of complacency. The school is successful because staff and governors believe that children deserve the best and they work hard to achieve it.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of North Islington Nursery School, London, N4 3RB

I had a wonderful time when I visited your school. Thank you for helping me to find out about it and telling me how much you love coming. I can see why so many of your mums, dads and carers said they wished they were children so they could come here. It was lovely to hear all the nice things you said about your teachers and to find out how happy you are because learning is fun.

Lots of good things happen in your school.

- You are really good at listening and joining in.
- I really enjoyed watching you dance and playing together outside.
- You are good at helping each other and everyone tries hard to be kind.
- You work very hard and do lots of interesting things. It was great to see how you were so careful when you were watching the slugs and woodlice.
- Your teachers make everything interesting and I know that you love going on all of the special trips.
- The adults are really good at helping everyone and especially those of you who find learning hard.
- The adults in the Nursery are very caring and kind.

I have asked the teachers to try different ways of asking you questions to let you have more time to think about your answers. I have also asked the teachers to find out more about what makes the teaching good so they can make it even better. I know that you will help them by always doing your best to listen and work hard.

It was lovely to see how happy you are and I hope that you will always be as happy at every school you go to.

Best wishes

Sean O'Toole Lead inspector