

Thornton Heath Early Years Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131723
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	293828
Inspection date	16 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Sue Vale

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	3-5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Tricia Burman
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Bellhouse
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2001
School address	51 Pridham Road Thornton Heath CR7 8RF
Telephone number	020 8684 0494
Fax number	020 8684 4737

Age group	3-5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Thornton Heath Early Years Centre caters for children from 2 to 5. There are 52 full time equivalent places for 3 to 4 year olds. Around a quarter are learning English as an additional language, and just under half are identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities. The Centre has been recently designated a Children's Centre. There have been 4 head teachers in 7 years; the current head teacher has been in post since September.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Thornton Early Years Centre is much liked by the parents and children. As one parent commented, 'My child always looks forward to going to school.' It provides a satisfactory quality of education with a number of good features. Leadership by the headteacher is good. In the short time she has been in post she has clearly identified the areas for improvement and has already implemented strategies for improvement.

Children start school with lower than expected skills in mathematics but broadly as expected in communication language and thinking skills and in personal social and emotional development. Overall, they make satisfactory progress, and by the time they leave Nursery they attain standards which are expected for their age. However, although satisfactory they achieve less well in developing their mathematical understanding but above what is expected in their personal social and emotional development.

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. Activities for the children are well planned. This allows children to develop their own interests and abilities and is why they make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. There are some missed opportunities to fully develop children's learning. This is because some groups are left too long without any adult input and are therefore not challenged to move onto the next step in their learning.

Children's personal development and well-being are good. They are very happy and keen to be at Nursery, although there is poor attendance amongst some families. Children are encouraged to become independent and confident learners and they work and play together well. Behaviour is good.

Children receive good pastoral care and are well looked after. They receive satisfactory guidance and support. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are identified early and good support given to help them progress. Parents are very pleased with the support their children receive. Teachers are currently trialling a new way of assessing children's work to ensure consistency and analysing the results to support moving children on in their learning. It is too soon to see the full impact of this work.

The curriculum is varied and captures children's interest. However, children do not have enough opportunities for developing their mathematical skills or to develop mathematical vocabulary. The school gives satisfactory value for money. It is in a good position to continue to improve as the new head teacher has already instigated a number of strategies to move the early years centre forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and consistency of assessments and 'next steps' in learning in particular to support teachers in challenging children in the next stage of their learning.
- Develop children's mathematical skills, particularly in relation to number and vocabulary related to mathematics.
- Encourage better attendance.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

A number of children start the Nursery with skills which are below what is expected for their age in mathematics. Overall children make satisfactory progress and achieve as expected in communication language and thinking, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical, and creative development. They make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development, due to good questioning by staff which helps them to understand their feelings and emotions. Children's mathematical development, whilst satisfactory, is not as rapid as in the other areas of learning because they do not have enough opportunities to develop the vocabulary or use numbers in their work. There is no significant variation in the performance of different groups of children and those learning English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are fully involved in nursery life and make similar progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in their personal development. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. Children are very happy at Nursery. They enjoy their time there. They show a keenness to discover and find out about new things. A number of children are confident learners and are happy to share what they have found out with adults. Overall they work and play together well. They show mature attitudes for their age in choosing activities and trying out new experiences. This prepares them well for the next step in their education. Children make a positive contribution to the nursery community, however attendance rates are very low. There are good opportunities to develop a healthy lifestyle and children enjoy using the outdoor area for physical activity. The children really enjoy this aspect of their time at Nursery. Staff are vigilant about children's safety. As one parent governor said, 'Children feel secure and happy here.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some good features. Staff know the children well and relationships are good. When teachers are working in small groups or on an individual one-to-one basis their interaction with children is good. Teachers ask relevant and pertinent questions which support children's learning and help them to make good progress in their personal social and emotional development. There are, however, missed opportunities to move all children on in their learning. Some groups are left for too long without adult input and therefore are not challenged or extended to move on to the next step in their learning.

Effective provision is made to support those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The Nursery has started to monitor the progress of all children, but this is in the early stages of its implementation and it is too soon to see the full impact of this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good, varied curriculum promotes interesting and practical activities both inside and outdoors. The Nursery is arranged for a free-flow of movement so that children can make their own choices about whether they want to play inside or out. This supports children's own freedom of choice and is why their personal and social development is good. However there are missed opportunities to develop children's mathematical vocabulary and understanding. Children use information and communication technology well and they are mature in their understanding of the use of computers and technical equipment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care provided for pupils is good. 'The staff are so caring,' commented one parent. Care and support for children with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. Child protection procedures are in place and are understood and followed by staff. Risk assessments and procedures for monitoring the health and safety of the children are robust. Parents feel much supported by the Nursery. They appreciate the classes and opportunities which are on offer to them as the Nursery develops as a children's centre. The Nursery has rightly identified the need to introduce a more consistent approach to assessment and the use of this to plan the next stage of children's learning. It has recently introduced a new system to track children's progress. This is still in the early stages and it is too soon to see its full impact.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management is good overall. The newly appointed headteacher has successfully identified where the areas for development are. In a short space of time she has introduced a number of effective new strategies that are already proving to be successful in moving the nursery forward. She has correctly identified the need to review the quality and consistency of assessment and is clear in her vision for the development of the Nursery as a children's centre serving the local community. Good leadership is already starting to have a positive impact on achievement and standards particularly in developing children's personal and social skills. This is why they achieve well in this aspect Governance is satisfactory. Whilst governors are keen and clearly support the development of the nursery into a children's centre they do not act fully as a 'critical friend' in providing strategic direction.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

24 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Thornton Heath Early Years Centre, Thornton Heath, CR7 8RF

It was lovely to meet you when I came to visit your nursery. I enjoyed seeing you playing outside and I really wanted to have a piece of the pizza you were cooking. It smelt delicious.

You are very happy at your nursery and obviously enjoy going there. There are lots of things which you do well.

- You really like coming to your nursery. You like learning lots of interesting new things.
- Some of you are very grown up and show real independence for children your age.
- Your teachers plan good activities for you and the curriculum is interesting and encourages you to want to learn.
- You have a good headteacher who leads the nursery very well.
- The teachers and other staff look after you very well.

In order to make your nursery even better:

- you need to do more work about numbers and learning about mathematics
- some of you need to come to nursery more regularly
- I have asked the teachers to look at the way they assess your work and how they can move you on to the 'next step' in your learning.

Best Wishes

Sue Vale
Lead inspector