

Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100005
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	307269
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2008
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	0–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lilian O'Callaghan
Headteacher	Miss Bernadette Duffy
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002
School address	49 Mecklenburgh Square London WC1N 2QA
Telephone number	020 7520 0385
Fax number	020 7520 0386

Age group	0-5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre is situated in the heart of the King's Cross area of London. Children from birth to 5 attend and come from a wide range of backgrounds. For the purposes of this inspection the education of the children aged 3–5 was looked at. Of these, a fifth of the places are designated for vulnerable children and their families and around two thirds are new to learning English. There are nineteen different languages spoke. Around a quarter of children are identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly in lower than expected language acquisition. Around a quarter are entitled to free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre is outstanding. It gives the children an excellent start to their education. Led by a highly experienced, inspirational headteacher, the staff put the children's learning and development of new skills and understanding as central to all that they do. Their clear vision, along with the exceptionally stimulating learning environment and curriculum, ensures that children make rapid progress and achieve really well. As one parent aptly wrote, 'This is an outstanding school and we are thrilled that our daughter is able to attend such an excellent Nursery. She has really blossomed in her time there and has benefited greatly from the wonderful teachers and stimulating, fun environment.'

Children reach above the expected standards in many areas of their learning by the time they leave the Nursery. The children benefit enormously from excellent teaching. A highly stimulating curriculum, the outstanding emphasis by teachers on developing children's personal, social and emotional development and on helping them in their language acquisition, enable children of all abilities and backgrounds to make outstanding progress in their learning. An aspect noted by one mother: 'My two children have had an outstanding education at Thomas Coram.'

Observations and assessments of what children know and can do are excellent and the information is used very well to challenge the children and to move them on to the next stage in their learning. The daily meetings held by staff to discuss children and their interests and advancement are thorough and incisive. The information shared and decisions made are significant factors in supporting the rapid progress made by the children. The Nursery has rightly identified an area for improvement in the way that children's progress is monitored, in order to make it clearer and more accessible to all staff.

Leadership and management are outstanding and a paramount reason as to why the Nursery is so successful. The care and welfare and the personal development of children so that they become independent, confident learners is central to how the Nursery is led and managed. The Nursery has made excellent progress since the last inspection and has excellent capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

As a Nursery school, the Foundation Stage is completely covered by Overall effectiveness section.

What the school should do to improve further

- Review the tracking of children's progress, in order to make it clearer and more accessible to all staff.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The children achieve very well. Attainment on entry for children is broadly as expected in most areas of learning but lower in language skills. They rise to the challenges they are set in their learning and make outstanding progress in acquiring new skills, knowledge and understanding. Around a third start Nursery with low levels of language development. The outstanding focus on developing children's positive self-esteem, confidence and independence is highly influential

in helping children to make rapid progress and to reach good standards. Most children reach, and many exceed, the early learning goals in physical, creative, communication language and literacy, mathematical, personal social and emotional development and in knowledge and understanding of the world by the time they leave the Nursery. Those children at an early stage of learning English make equally excellent rates of progress. Well-planned activities openly encourage speaking and communication skills. Children with learning difficulties also make rapid progress and achieve very well through the encouragement and good interaction with staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are also excellent. The centre's focus on developing children's positive self-esteem and supporting them and their families right from the very first time they arrive at the centre, visiting for example, the 'drop in' as babies, is influential in helping the children to become happy, independent learners. This is because they are interested and encouraged to want to learn and to find out more. Children make a positive contribution to the Nursery community. They work safely, and are encouraged to adopt a healthy life style. Children really enjoy their healthy school lunches as seen by the second and third helpings they politely asked for! Attendance is satisfactory. Behaviour is outstanding. Children are polite, well mannered and clearly know right from wrong. This was demonstrated by a group of children on the swing, who were eager to have a turn and clearly pointed out that the child on the swing should not be greedy and 'must take turns.' Individual and small group work, planned to meet the individual interests of children, enhances their personal, social and emotional development and this helps all children to make the excellent progress that they do.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. All who work with the children have an excellent understanding of their individual needs, interests and abilities. Adults are very good role models. They have the balance right between when to leave children to explore and find out things for themselves and when adults need to be involved in order to challenge and move children's learning on. This was seen when children were building a train, which they had already drawn and designed, out of large blocks. The excellent use of questioning by the teacher ensured that the children not only enjoyed the building, but also were thinking and solving problems. This, like many others, is an excellent example of why children make such rapid progress in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The well-planned, rich and varied curriculum promotes relevant and practical activities both inside and outdoors. Hands-on activities make learning fun and children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Children with learning difficulties are fully integrated. There is very good provision for those children at an early stage of learning English and a high priority is given in the curriculum to the development of speaking and extending the children's

vocabulary, through the work on linking letters and sounds. The curriculum is interesting, relevant and inclusive and does much to develop children's independent learning and freedom of choice. There is effective use of information and communication technology. Creative development is equally encouraged and children make great gains in designing and creating models and pictures. Throughout the year, children have many opportunities to enhance their learning through visits to local places of interest, such as museums and London Zoo.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The Nursery is safe and secure and staff work very closely with parents to ensure their children's well being. Vulnerable children are very effectively looked after. Staff are regularly trained in child protection procedures, risk assessments are carried out, both around the Nursery and for when they go out on trips. Health and safety matters are dealt with effectively and quickly. Individual and small group work, planned to meet the individual interests of children enhances their personal, social and emotional development so that they become confident, independent and happy learners. Assessment is very good; observations and evaluations of what children know and can do are excellent and the information is used very well to challenge the children and to move them on to the next stage in their learning. The daily meetings held by staff to discuss children and their interests are thorough and incisive. The information shared and decisions made are significant factors in supporting the rapid progress made by the pupils. The Nursery has rightly identified an area for improvement in tracking children's progress, in order to make it clearer and more accessible to all staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. Central to this is the outstanding leadership from the headteacher. It is her vision and determination to put the children first, which is so effective in leading a staff team that has maintained high expectations over a number of years. The Nursery accurately identifies key strengths and weaknesses and has excellent strategies in place to bring about further improvement. A very good analysis by the staff of 'Every Child Matters' and the implementation of the new birth to 5 curriculum framework (both are national guidelines on the education and welfare of young children), and how these are being implemented in the day- to- day running of the centre has been helpful in ensuring that full attention is given to these. It is because of this that personal development and care and guidance of the children are so strong and why children achieve so well. The school's ethos is such that all are valued and encouraged to achieve to the best of their individual ability; the outstanding curriculum and activities are planned to match individual children's interests, which result in exceptional standards being achieved. There is very good governance of the school. Strengths and areas for development are closely reviewed, questions asked and findings acted upon. There are outstanding links with families, the parent's centre and external agencies. This really promotes and supports the feeling of community cohesion within the centre.

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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

30 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre, London, WC1N 2QA

I really enjoyed visiting your Nursery. It is an excellent place to learn and a wonderful start to your education. I really liked the outside area and garden that you have. I know that you like your Nursery and I agree with you it is a very special place.

You and your teachers do lots of things really well:

- you are very good at working out how to solve problems
- you work very hard and learn lots of interesting things
- your teachers also work very hard and make what you learn exciting
- you are very good at finding out about things and how they work and about the world around you
- you play and work together really well
- your headteacher and other staff are very good at what they do.

In order to make your Nursery even better I have asked the teachers to look at the way they check how well you are doing a bit more closely.

Yours sincerely

Sue Vale

Lead Inspector