

Rachel Keeling Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100886
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	307518
Inspection date	4 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Charalambos Loizou

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	3-4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Clare Barnett
Headteacher	Mrs Avril Rayner (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2004
School address	Bullards Place Morpeth Street London E2 0PS
Telephone number	020 8980 5856
Fax number	020 8980 8874

Age group	3-4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following areas:

- the quality of teaching and the curriculum, particularly their impact on children's personal development, and the pace of progress and standards reached by the children;
- the range and quality of assessment, and the monitoring of activities that the children choose for themselves;
- the extent to which the school acts on the children's and parents' views, and the links established with parents and the local community.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the analysis of assessments of children's performance, as well as parents' responses to questionnaires and discussions with children, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is located in an area of mainly social housing and a significant proportion of children are eligible to receive a free school meal. It admits three-year-olds in September and January. Currently, 60 children attend full-time and 39 are part-time. The children come from a wide range of backgrounds that represent the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Bethnal Green area of London. Two-thirds are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. A significant proportion, nearly one fifth, has learning difficulties and/or disabilities and receive additional support, particularly with speech, language and communication. The school is staffed by teachers, nursery nurses, teaching assistants, ancillary and support staff, and adults who work with families and outside agencies. The acting headteacher is managing the school until governors appoint a permanent headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Highly effective leadership and excellent teaching and care benefit the children enormously at this outstanding school. The vast majority of parents and carers are pleased with the school. Many have paid tribute to the efforts of the staff, one commenting, for example, that her child 'is so happy at the school and I feel it is such a lovely place for little ones'. Children and families of all backgrounds feel welcomed and valued. Inclusion, racial harmony and relationships in this culturally diverse school community are excellent. At the start of each day, the staff, including the site manager, wait at the door to greet every child and family member. The home and school support worker is also on hand to speak to parents having forged excellent links with the local community. The popular toy and book libraries successfully promote learning and play in school and at home.

The children arrive at school with a smile, eagerly anticipating another day of work and play that is enjoyable, stimulating and challenging. They behave extremely well and treat each other with respect. Children's efforts are praised and valued, which is reflected in the high quality displays of their work. To enhance teaching and learning, children and staff use information and communication technology (ICT) very well. For example, children use cameras or listen to recordings of music and stories. The children grow in confidence and become enthusiastic learners that are prepared extremely well for the next stage of their education.

The majority of children join the school with skills and abilities that are well below those expected of three-year-olds. Many start with low language and communication skills and a few have more severe learning difficulties that require intense support. Outstanding teaching, care and support enable children of all abilities to make excellent progress so that standards in nearly all areas of learning are above those expected by the time the children leave. Even though standards are broadly in line with those expected in communication, language and literacy, the children have made rapid progress in relation to their different starting points.

Good attendance reflects how well the children enjoy school. The staff provide an excellent curriculum so the children are busy and absorbed by all that is offered. 'Look at our play dough, we made it ourselves', says one when asked about the ingredients, and amongst a group dressed as mini-beasts, another said, 'Look at what we found in the garden', eagerly improvising the movements of a butterfly and showing others where she and her friends found some ladybird larvae. The children develop early scientific and observational skills when watching the movements of snails, some using magnifying glasses to help them draw finer details. The staff skilfully link practical and engaging activities with other areas of learning, for example, by enabling the children to apply their creative and physical skills to replicate 'snail movement' in the form of role-play, drawings and paintings.

The children learning English as an additional language make rapid progress. Nursery rhymes, games and action songs quickly help to improve their spoken language. This was seen to very good effect when a group improvised through role-play the story of 'Little Red Riding Hood'. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are extremely well supported by the talented staff team. Visual prompts, such as pictures of familiar objects, are used extremely well by children who find it difficult to communicate or ask questions.

The staff ensure that all children work and play in clean, safe and stimulating indoor and outdoor areas. The children put on their waterproof outfits and happily explore muddy puddles, or dress up in winter clothes carrying umbrellas to, as one put it, 'stop the rain making me wet'. The

outdoor areas are superb and offer many challenges. Amongst what appear to be a series of mini-assault courses that include low ropes and climbing frames, the children boldly manoeuvre and adapt their body shapes to explore different pathways. These activities are physically demanding and challenging so the children develop their orientation and physical skills extremely well. The children respond exceptionally well during imaginative play, as when a group spontaneously organised a game without being prompted by adults. The children organised themselves, sat in a circle then outlined which game they would play, quickly attracting the attention of other children and staff who joined in as a result. Visitors and parents add much to the children's experiences, such as a sports coach who puts them through their paces practising ball skills.

The school encourages the children to be active and independent. Tidy up time develops their sense of responsibility. New arrivals quickly settle into routines because their more experienced classmates help them to integrate, for example, showing them how to self-register when hanging coats and collecting their name labels. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is outstanding. They reflect on and learn about the world through a wealth of experiences, such as international days celebrated with parents. Specially themed projects extend learning, like the celebration of Black history, African drumming, role-play and story-telling. Daily fruit eating and healthy lunches, as well as regular physical activities help the children to learn about healthy and active living.

Well devised activities engage the children and stimulate curiosity, including opportunities for them to share and handle books in comfortable and well resourced book corners. Building blocks are used very well to solve problems that successfully develop the children's mathematical and spatial skills. Accurate records of children's performance are kept and the staff regularly observe the children to assess and analyse their progress. There is a balanced programme, providing opportunities for children to choose activities for themselves. Some children find it difficult to settle in one area. Whilst the pace of learning is excellent for most children, for those who find it difficult to choose or settle for sustained periods, the pace of their learning slows. This is an area of work already identified by the staff. Very good planning systems are in place but are not used consistently by all staff to optimise learning opportunities for all children when choosing activities for themselves.

Outstanding leadership, management and governance have guided very good improvements to the school since the last inspection. The staff work in excellent partnership with parents, carers, other schools and organisations. There are very effective safeguarding procedures to minimise risks and to ensure that children are safe. Despite the difficulties of appointing a permanent headteacher, the inspirational leadership of the acting headteacher has minimised any disruption to the work of the school. The strong resolve and teamwork of all staff, demonstrate their commitment and devotion to the children and local community. They respond extremely well to parents' and children's views. The staff's accurate evaluations of the school's effectiveness, although modest, reflect the very high expectations the headteacher and governors set themselves. The school has excellent capacity to keep on developing.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

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

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that adults engage those children who find it difficult to choose or sustain an activity to extend and maximise learning further.

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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	2
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

17 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Rachel Keeling Nursery School, London, E2 0PS

You were all so nice to me when I came to see you. I think you go to an excellent school. There are lots for you to do and I can see why you love school so much. Your parents like the school very much as well and they like the way everyone in the school is looking after you. I know that you like going to the toy and book libraries and I was so pleased to see how well many of you share books and play with each other during the day. You make up some lovely stories and I really enjoyed listening to some of you when you pretended to be characters in 'Little Red Riding Hood'.

Everyone is looking after you and your school very well. I was very pleased to see how well you all help each other and make friends. I really loved looking at your beautiful garden and outdoor play areas, and thank you so much for letting me have lunch with you, it was lovely. You are really clever at making things and I thought that your pictures and drawings of snails and butterflies were fantastic, well done!

I have asked the staff to keep checking to make sure that some of you choose things and work on them for longer to make sure you are all doing as well as you can.

I wish you and your parents the very best and I am so pleased to have met you all, you were all great.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou

Lead Inspector