

Dorothy Gardner Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101105
Local Authority	Westminster
Inspection number	307585
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Marianne Harris

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	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Jude Lawrence and Ms Fiona Weibren
Headteacher	Ms Maggie Ross
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2001
School address	289–293 Shirland Road London W9 3JY
Telephone number	020 8969 5835
Fax number	020 8969 1952

Age group	3–5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small Nursery school that is part of a larger Children's Centre providing extended services to local families. The school is federated with another local Nursery and they share a governing body. Children come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. About half of the children are learning English as an additional language, with many at an early stage of learning the language. The school has places for children with particular needs and consequently the proportion who have learning difficulties and disabilities is higher than normally seen.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. It is well led and managed and there is considerable success in promoting children's personal development so that families feel very welcome and supported by the school. Many parents report that the staff make a big difference to their lives as all cultures and backgrounds are celebrated, a very important factor in this culturally diverse community. Children enjoy coming to school and settle very quickly and develop a thirst for learning. Consequently their personal development and well-being are excellent. Children learn the importance of keeping healthy and safe and of becoming part of an ever-growing community. The staff work effectively with those outside the school, especially with agencies that are planning to extend the services offered to children and their families. The federation with a local Nursery is working well as both settings are taking a lead in providing care and education for children in the local community. Both schools share the same governing body and, because there are several vacancies, much work falls upon the governors as they oversee the expansion of the services offered. Although the staff of the school represent the many cultures of the local community this is not necessarily so with the governing body. The school acknowledges this and is keen to recruit those from the minority ethnic community so that they have a voice in the expanding Children's Centre.

Children make good progress in the Nursery because teaching and learning are effective. Many interesting activities are planned, although there is strong emphasis on promoting children's personal and language development and not enough on developing their mathematical skills. Children with specific needs are very well supported and settle quickly into school routines. Children who are at an early stage of learning English are equally well supported, often by an adult who speaks their language. Consequently they soon become used to school and really enjoy learning. The curriculum is good and draws on many outside visitors to enrich learning. The school works very hard to promote harmony, tolerance and understanding of the many faiths and beliefs. Care, guidance and support are excellent. Not only do the staff support children very well, they also support the families, encouraging them into the Nursery and helping them settle into the country where necessary. This is much appreciated by the many parents who responded to the questionnaire.

The issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been successfully tackled and there is a strong drive by all staff to improve further. This improvement and the school's very accurate self-evaluation show that there is excellent capacity to improve. The impact of the outstanding self-evaluation is evident in rising standards in mathematical development and in parents being much more involved in their children's education. They know that they are welcome and that staff actively listen to their ideas and act on them. Many parents are willing to take a role in the governing body. The school sees the challenges of expanding further as an opportunity to further serve the local community.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

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

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more activities to encourage children's mathematical development.

- Seek to strengthen the governing body by recruiting from the local community in order fully to represent the children's needs in future expansion.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children join the Nursery they have skills and knowledge that are generally below those expected for their age. Many spend almost two years in the school and make good progress in all areas of learning. Children make particularly good progress and achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development. The school's own data show that progress in mathematical development has only recently improved. Children who are at an early stage of learning English are very well supported so that they achieve well and make good gains in learning the language. Children with particular needs also receive very good support so that they can join in with all the activities and make good progress. By the time they leave the Nursery to move to their various primary schools children have reached standards that are generally in line with those expected for their age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development is outstanding. They settle into school very quickly and soon become confident when tackling new activities and making new friends. Much emphasis is put on encouraging them to eat healthily and children choose healthy snacks in school. Children know that they must put their coats on when playing outside if it is cold and many are very independent when dressing themselves. They love learning and play together very well. Their behaviour is exemplary and relationships throughout the Nursery are extremely positive. Parents comment on how much progress their children make in their personal development and some say that this has made a great difference to their home lives. All aspects of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Most notable is the way in which the school has brought unity to the very diverse cultural community. Many festivals are celebrated and children learn about and celebrate the faiths and customs of a wide variety of religions. Children are very well prepared for the next stage of the education. The staff make sure that they visit the primary school to which they are transferring and this makes the transition very smooth and a pleasant experience for the children. Attendance is satisfactory and the school does all it can to encourage parents to bring their children to school regularly and on time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teaching team is made up of many professionals who all work very well together with clearly defined roles. Consequently there are many adults to encourage the children to learn and play well together. The Nursery area is used very effectively and the outside garden is used constantly so that children who want to be active have many opportunities to run and play. This has a positive impact on children's physical development as they learn skills of balance and agility. Much emphasis is put on developing children's language skills; many adult led activities encourage children to think and discuss their ideas. This is especially beneficial for children who are at an early stage of learning English and they make good progress in their learning. Children make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the world

because staff plan many activities that encourage children to investigate for themselves. The tasks that are offered to the children are well planned and based on clear assessments of what children already know and understand. There is, however, less support for children's mathematical development, though this is currently being addressed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum based on all the areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage. Planning is thorough and much emphasis is put on supporting children's personal and language development. There are fewer activities planned to support mathematical development throughout the Nursery. There are many visits into the local community and this has a significant impact on developing children's cultural awareness and an appreciation of the many backgrounds that are represented in the Nursery. These visits include shopping in a variety of shops and visits to local places of worship, including the local mosque. There are many visitors to the school, including parents, who enrich learning further as they share their experiences with the children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support given to children are outstanding. Each child has a named adult, a keyworker, who looks after them and their families. The drive to encourage children's personal development ensures that all backgrounds and cultures are celebrated in the Nursery and that parents are acknowledged as an important part of their child's education. Parents feel that they can talk to anyone in the Nursery and that they will be listened to. One parent commented, 'The staff at this Nursery have changed my life'. Special care is taken to ensure that children who are new to the country have access to someone who speaks their language and parents are given all the support possible to ensure that they settle quickly. Every care is taken to ensure that the school is safe and welcoming and that all child protection procedures, including risk assessments, are robust. Staff make accurate assessments on the progress that children make and set targets for their learning. These are referred to at planning meetings and activities are provided to help children meet their targets and make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and ensures that new staff both reflect the diversity of the local community and are quickly able to play an effective part in school improvement. The school has evaluated very accurately where their strengths lie and where there are areas that need developing. The drive to reflect the needs of the local community in order to promote unity is outstanding because it enables parents to become fully involved in their children's education. There is constant review to ensure that the needs of all pupils are being met. Parents comment on how welcoming the school is and on how their views are acted on. Governors are very supportive of the school and are good. There are several vacancies at the moment and the school acknowledges the need to recruit more governors from the community so that local needs are fully represented and that all have a voice in the provision.

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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?	2
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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	2

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	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?	2
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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	2
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

19 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Dorothy Gardner Centre, London, W9 3JY

Thank you very much for welcoming me into your school a few days ago and for helping me to find out about your work. I really enjoyed my time with you and am now writing to let you know what I found out.

I think that your Nursery is good and some parts of it are excellent. Your parents told me a lot about how well you are welcomed into school and how hard you work. Your teachers are good and help you learn about many things. I especially enjoyed watching you work with the batteries and was impressed by how much you found out about using motors. You make good progress. I really loved looking at the work you have carried out on understanding about how other people live. You have a good understanding about the religions that are in your local area. I have asked your teachers to help you learn more about mathematics and hope that you enjoy learning about numbers and shape as much as you enjoy listening to stories and playing together.

Your teachers told me about the work that is going on to give your families extra classes and opportunities to work alongside you. This is very good and is being organised by some people who are called governors. You may see some of them in school. They are doing a good job of helping your school, but there should be more of them. I have asked your headteacher to see if she can find some more from the local families to make sure that you have what you really need from the extra services.

Thank you once again for welcoming me into your Nursery. I wish you all good luck in the future and maybe we will meet again.

Marianne Harris

Additional Inspector