

Portman Early Childhood Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132151
Local Authority	Westminster
Inspection number	315940
Inspection dates	28–29 April 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	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Audrey Millar
Headteacher	Miss Joanna White
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2004
School address	12–18 Salisbury Street London NW8 8DE
Telephone number	020 7641 5436
Fax number	020 7641 5427

Age group	0–5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. This inspection looked at the provision for the Nursery education at the centre for children aged 3-5.

Description of the school

Portman Early Childhood Centre and Nursery is situated in the heart of Westminster. It serves an ethnically diverse community. Since the last inspection the proportion of children learning English as an additional language has increased to the extent that the vast majority of children are new to learning English. There are 16 different languages represented amongst the children, the main one spoken is Arabic. Attainment on entry for many is well below what is expected for children of this age and an increasing number of children require speech and language support, or help with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

During their time in the Nursery at Portman Early Childhood Centre, children receive a good start to their education. The centre rightly prides itself on the integration and support it gives to the children and their families. As one mother commented, 'It's like one big family at Portman.' From the moment children visit in the 'drop-in' centre until they leave aged five, the support and care of the children and their families underpins all that the centre provides.

Most of the children begin Nursery with skills and abilities well below those expected for children of their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and in their personal and social development. Good teaching and a real interest in the welfare of individuals enables the children to gain in confidence and helps them to swiftly settle in and achieve well. By the time they leave Nursery, they have made good progress in developing spoken English and in their personal, social and emotional development, even though standards are still below those expected for their age. Well-planned practical activities allow children to develop their own interests and abilities independently. This provides them with a strong foundation for the next stage of their education. As a result, children achieve and progress well towards the goals expected of them.

The curriculum is broad and well planned with practical and engaging activities that allow children to learn through play. The free flow of movement between the inside and outside areas means that children widen their learning experiences and grow in confidence.

Children's personal development and well-being are excellent. They are very happy and keen to be at Nursery, although attendance amongst some families does not always reflect this. Children become independent and confident learners and they work and play together very well. They understand about a healthy lifestyle and have many opportunities for physical development. More challenging behaviour from some children is handled well by staff. Children learn the differences between right and wrong and understand the expectations to behave well.

The care of the children is outstanding, and their academic guidance is good. Excellent use is made of external agencies many of whom are based in the centre itself. Wide reaching support goes far into the local community, as a number of parents have commented, it is not just the child who is supported at Portman. 'My son has been at Portman for almost two years now, I have received nothing but support, care and love from all the staff there...they have helped my family as a whole.'

Leadership and management is good overall. Middle managers are relatively new to their roles, but their enthusiasm and keen attitudes are having a positive effect in moving the centre on. The governing body are also keen and supportive. They have only been at full complement since September and many are new to their role as a critical friend. The head teacher leads the Nursery very well and has a clear vision for its future development. The Nursery's view of itself is accurate and good progress has been made since the last inspection. The school's successful record of improvement shows that its capacity to improve further is excellent.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

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

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the role of middle managers.
- Encourage more regular attendance from some families.
- Develop the Governing Body in their role as a critical friend.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children, including the large numbers learning English as an additional language, and those identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. There are increasing numbers who start Nursery with well below expected skills in personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy skills. The Nursery is very aware of this and staff plan a good range of activities which encourage children to settle quickly and help them to develop their confidence. Consequently, children make good progress and achieve standards appropriate for their age in mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and in their creative and physical development. They make good progress towards what is expected in communication language and literacy and in their personal and social emotional development. This is because of good quality teaching, and adult interaction, which encourages children to try speaking English and to help them to develop new and meaningful vocabulary. Children with learning difficulties achieve well because the staff focus effectively on meeting their specific learning needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and well-being are excellent. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The centre's focus on developing children's positive self-esteem and supporting them and their families is influential in helping 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. Despite the fact that the Nursery carefully explains to parents the importance of children attending regularly, attendance of some families is low and this affects the overall attendance rate. 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 progress well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know the children very well and this helps them to plan activities, which support individual children's learning. This is why children make good progress. The Nursery rightly puts an emphasis on developing and improving children's communication and language skills and in developing their personal, social and emotional skills. Good use of questioning by most adults helps children to improve their spoken language in response to the questions asked, and in this extends their vocabulary, as was seen when the children observed and described how snails moved. This is of particular help to the large numbers of children who are learning English as an additional language. It is also an important means

of developing young children's communication skills, and is why they achieve as well as they do. The support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding and allows these children to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are new to learning English are fully catered for. There is a strong focus on early speaking skills, through encouragement and good role modelling of language by teachers and adults working with the children. The use of information and communication technology by children is satisfactory overall. 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 helps their personal and social development. During one particularly 'rainy' session a small group of children were fascinated by the feeling of the rain on their tongues. Staff used this interest very well to help increase the children's knowledge and understanding of the world. The curriculum is enhanced by the wide range and well-organised trips and visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care given to the children and their families is outstanding. Academic guidance and support is good. Children receive a positive start to their school life because the staff show a real commitment to meeting the personal and welfare needs of children. Child protection procedures are in place and are understood and followed by staff. Risk assessments for school visits and procedures for monitoring the health and safety of the children are in place. Parents are particularly pleased with the support, which they receive, as one mother commented, 'I am a very happy mother putting my son into Portman Nursery, my child is very safe and cared for...they are always there to help.' Good observations are made by staff about what children know and can do and their individual interests. These observations form the basis of future planning. Whilst family workers at the centre know the children in their groups very well, it is not always clear for all staff about the next step to be taken to move children on in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management is good overall. There is a strong sense of teamwork throughout the Nursery. The headteacher leads very well, and clearly understands the centre's strengths and areas for development, consequently, self-evaluation is good. Equality of opportunity for all children is important and opportunities are managed very well which ensure that all participate fully. There are good procedures for day-to-day management to ensure that things run smoothly. A number of the middle managers and coordinators are new to their roles, their enthusiasm, as one commented, 'to get it right for the children,' is commendable, but as yet their roles are not yet fully embedded. There are plans to strengthen their roles and responsibilities. The staff adopt good systematic procedures for monitoring their own performance and the children's progress. The governors are supportive and are well led by the Chair. However, many governors are also new to their positions and are not yet fully conversant in developing their role as a

critical friend. There is scope to improve their role so they are better able to fully challenge and support the staff.

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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?	1
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	2
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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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

08 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Portman Early Childhood Centre, London, NW8 8DE

It was lovely to meet you when I came to visit your Nursery. I enjoyed sharing lunch with you and talking to the children when we looked at the snails. I wonder what has happened to the butterflies now that they have flown away.

Your Nursery is a good school. There are many things which you do well.

- You are very happy and like coming to your Nursery.
- There are many interesting things for you to try to have a go at.
- You really enjoy going to Nursery and playing outside.
- You have good teachers who look after you and arrange many different activities for you to try out.
- You receive excellent care during your time at Nursery.
- The Nursery is very well led by your headteacher.

Your headteacher manages the Nursery very well and is thoroughly supported by all the staff. I have asked that all the staff and governors do a bit more so they can all manage the centre better. You and your families can help too by making sure that you all come to the Nursery every day. I hope that you will explain to your families how much you enjoy Nursery and try to go every day.

Best wishes

Sue Vale

Lead Inspector