

Holmewood Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100554
Local Authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	323295
Inspection date	6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Evans

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 (total)	124
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Yinka Vogel
Headteacher	Sue Donovan OBE
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2005
School address	66 Upper Tulse Hill Brixton London SW2 2RW
Telephone number	020 8674 2186
Fax number	020 8674 8838

Age group	3–5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the standards children achieve and how these are assessed by the school, the degree of consistency between adults in supporting children's learning, and how well leaders and managers at all levels are supporting school improvement. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, analysis of school tracking and assessment data, together with evidence from monitoring and from discussions with the acting headteacher, other senior leaders and adults, members of the governing body and children. The views of parents and carers were gathered from the returns of the Ofsted questionnaires and discussions with a great many parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Holmewood is an oversubscribed Nursery school located in an area of substantial deprivation where over a third of children are eligible for free school meals. It provides education for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Black British, African or Caribbean children make up half of the school's numbers. Well over half of the children have English as an additional language and there are 25 different languages spoken throughout the school. A well above average proportion of children have speech, language and communication difficulties. The Treehouse Children's Centre on the school site is purpose-built. Wraparound care from 08.00 to 18.00 is available for children. The centre runs breakfast and after-school clubs. A creche supports adults attending a variety of courses and drop-in groups for childminders, parents, carers and their families. The school has considerable experience in providing family support. On the date of the inspection the headteacher was in Mozambique on a sabbatical tour, further developing a global perspective of early learning initiatives.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Holmewood is an outstanding Nursery school. Over three in every four parents returned questionnaires and, of these, nearly every one was hugely complimentary of the school's provision. One parent wrote, 'My child is looking forward to moving to a new school but she is devastated that she will be leaving. She enjoys every moment and even on the weekends she wishes that she was going to school.' Parents are very appreciative of the opportunity to tour the school and experience the ethos of the school well before their child enters the Nursery. This gives the school valuable time to prepare appropriate resources for the individual child and, where appropriate, involve external agencies to support the family. A further key element in the success of the process of preparing parent and child for entry to the Nursery school is the outstanding work of the Children's Centre on site. Vibrant, attractive and colourful displays provide a very stimulating learning environment for young children. The range of services provided to parents and the local community in the centre is excellent. Very effective sessions on 'Wriggle and Rhyme', art and craft, information and communication technology (ICT) and English for speakers of other languages help parents to develop their own skills as well as giving them ideas on how to help their children's learning. As one parent said, 'Our child teaches us English!'

In the Nursery highly skilled teachers and all other adults provide a fair, firm and consistent framework for children's learning. All have an excellent understanding of how young children learn. The activities motivate children and are exceptionally well planned to move them on from the level at which they have been working. A parent writes, 'My child has benefited from the extra group time for more able children asking me, for example, for the name of the book's illustrator or confidently counting the number of clothes on the radiator at home.' Children of all attainment levels make excellent progress across all areas of learning. By the time they move on to primary school, standards are well above those expected. The inclusion arrangements and support for children who have special learning, behavioural, language or cultural needs are outstanding.

Teachers provide a very well planned balance between those activities where key adults identify focused activities to meet a specific child's needs and those where children select their own resources and discover things for themselves. The outstanding outdoor environment is used to especially good effect as an integral part of the school curriculum. The school's self evaluation shows that, in common with the picture nationally, there are differences in achievement patterns between boys and girls, particularly in language development. It recognises that there is more to do, but a number of strategies are beginning to have some success. For example, voluntary working groups of children on letters and sounds sit on mats in the open playground rather than in the classroom. These attract many more boys. In the 15-minute session observed, concentration spans were very impressive. Boys knew that if they wished, they were free to move away to play on the attractive range of climbing frames and bikes around them. Children are enthralled by the quality of story-telling and love looking at books. Staff and governors pay excellent attention to children's welfare and the Nursery is a very safe and happy place to be. Attendance and punctuality are excellent. One parent put the views of the very many when writing, 'Holmewood is a very special place. It is a haven for young children where all their early learning needs are met.' Rigorous attention is given to ensuring the health, safety, welfare and protection of all children, including through outstanding links with many different agencies and other schools. Children develop an excellent awareness of the importance of healthy eating,

cleanliness and regular exercise, and the need to ensure their safety, for example, by handling resources carefully. Parents provide high levels of praise for the way they are encouraged to participate in their child's development.

Sensitive induction arrangements help children settle in very quickly and they greatly enjoy their time in the Nursery and Children's Centre, enthusiastically joining in all the activities and working and playing very happily together. Behaviour is excellent and children get on exceptionally well with each other. This was clearly illustrated at lunchtime when small, very friendly family groupings led by their key person sat around individual dinner tables enjoying their lunches. They develop confidence and self-esteem on these occasions. At the breakfast club children eat scrambled eggs made from the fresh eggs laid by the school hens. Unusually in Brixton, and linked to the hens and hatching chicks, children have a visit from a farm labourer as well as talks from the police and the fire brigade and other occupations from within their local community. The wide and imaginative range of curriculum activities successfully encourages children to meet new experiences and to face new challenges. Children develop a sense of responsibility, helping each other in different tasks and in getting out or tidying away resources. Excellent arrangements for assessing children's progress, including regular observations of each child, provide staff with very good information to help support learning further and to report to parents. A crucial part of the assessment arrangements is that at the end of each day all staff meet together to evaluate their observations that have been written throughout the day. The focus is on teamwork between adults, so that they can together best meet individual needs. The attention to detail, sharing of information and subsequent follow-up underpin the outstanding progress made by all children by the time they transfer to their primary school.

Two parents spoke of their own excellent experience as children themselves at the Nursery in the 1980s. Now their child is at the school because 'Holmewood has gone from strength to strength - I will continue to send any future children here'. The school has been so successful over such a long period because of the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher and the superb support she is given in improving provision by the teamwork of many long-serving teaching and support staff, administrative personnel and governors. The Nursery and the Children's Centre have a very clear idea of how well they are doing. Its improvement planning is based on a well planned professional development programme to support teachers and adults, as, for example, in meeting the challenge of the new EYFS changes. Staff are very reflective, continually adjusting their practice to meet the needs of children and to help them do their best. The school is exceptionally well placed to maintain its high quality education and improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build and extend current strategies to support the achievement of both boys and girls.

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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 is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
The standards[1] reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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 effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?	1

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

19 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Holmewood Nursery School, London, SW2 2RW

We really enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for helping us to find out about it.

You and your parents think your Nursery is a very special place to be. We agree with you and think your Nursery is excellent. We were very impressed with the hens you have in school - I know that some of you really enjoyed eating the fresh eggs that the hens had laid.

Here are some of the things we found out that were good about the Nursery.

- You enjoy your time in the Nursery very much and you make outstanding progress.
- You have an excellent headteacher. Staff and governors help her to make sure you have the very best education possible.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you all get on very well together.
- We were very impressed at how well you concentrated and learned in the classroom and in the playground.
- Adults take excellent care of you and your parents are very pleased that you are safe and well looked after.
- Staff work very well with other people, especially your parents, to help you learn and develop.

Your headteacher is very good at looking for ways in which to help make the Nursery even better. We have asked her and the staff, with your help, to continue to give you all even more opportunities to enjoy your learning.

Best wishes and thank you again for helping us.

Yours sincerely

Brian Evans

Lead Inspector