

Old Church Nursery School and Children's Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100885
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	323366
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Jane Wotherspoon HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of children	3–4
Gender of children	Mixed
Number on roll	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Warburton
Headteacher	Peggy Messer
Date of previous school inspection	November 2005
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). The inspector made seven observations of teaching, learning and progress, and held meetings with the chair of governors and staff. She observed the school's work, spoke informally with the children, and looked at a range of policies and documents including the school development plan, governors' minutes and 24 parental questionnaires.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following:

- whether achievement is outstanding overall and if there is any difference in the learning and progress of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the impact on children's learning of any inconsistency in the quality of dialogue and interaction between adults and children
- the accuracy of judgements about children's achievement and how effectively observations of children's learning are used to identify the next steps in learning.

Information about the school

The school has 80 full-time and 40 part-time places. Children start part-time after they are three, either in September or January. They become full-time one or two terms later. Children transfer to local primary schools after they are four. This means that some have five terms in the nursery but some have as little as three terms. The school has a well-established tradition of providing additional services to parents and the community including baby and toddler groups, the toy library, parenting classes, and family learning courses. Building on this provision, the school was designated a Children's Centre in February 2008. It is currently in the process of recruiting a number of staff to key positions that will enable it to provide an even wider range of extended services. The school has achieved a Basic Skills Award, Investors in People status, and the Effective Early Learning (EEL) Award.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	120	N/A
Free school meals	28%	N/A
Proportions of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	18%	N/A
Proportion of children from minority ethnic groups	92%	N/A
Proportion of children who speak English as an additional language	87%	N/A
Proportion of children with a statement of special educational needs	0	N/A

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school in which children achieve well in all areas of learning and make outstanding progress in their personal development. A systematic approach to finding out what needs to improve gives staff and governors a clear view for the way forward. The school knows, for example, that to be outstanding the quality of provision must be more consistent. A shared ambition to make the school a focus for the wider community has led to the development of extended services and designation as a children's centre. Strong teamwork and the way that improvements have been tackled in the past show the school's good ability to continue meeting the challenges it sets for itself.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Improve the consistency in the quality of teaching and assessment by:

- providing further training and guidance for staff to ensure that interactions with children are always clearly focused on extending their learning
- monitoring rigorously to ensure that assessment procedures are followed in the same way
- providing further opportunities for staff to moderate their assessments of children's learning.

Raise children's attainment in early literacy and aspects of mathematical development by:

- providing further opportunities for targeted teaching that extends children's learning in these areas
- ensuring that the work carried out in the key worker group sessions has maximum impact on the learning of all children.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of children?

2

Children's knowledge and skills are better than expected for their age in their personal and social, physical, and creative development. They are similar to expectations in the other areas of learning. Children who spend only three terms in the nursery are not doing so well at learning about sounds and letters. Their reading, writing and mathematical skills are not well developed by the time they move on to primary school. Taking account of the time that children attend the nursery, they achieve well overall given their starting points. They learn effectively and make good progress in sessions.

Children learning English as an additional language make good progress in learning new words. All children are developing confidence in speaking and in joining in with familiar phrases from well-known stories. Children with learning difficulties make gains more slowly than other children but still make good progress from their starting points to meet the targets that are set for them.

Children settle very well at the start of the day. They are confident to leave their parents and even children new to the nursery follow the set routines. Older children show a high level of confidence and independence. Most become absorbed in their learning and concentrate for an unusually long time, for example, when experimenting with mixing colours. Their enthusiasm and enjoyment in everything they do is clear for all to see. Children are learning to take responsibility for resources at 'tidy up time'. They behave well and are developing positive relationships with each other as they learn to share and take turns. Most attend regularly but a small number miss too much school.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
The quality of children's learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
Children's attainment ¹	3
To what extent do children feel safe?	1
How well do children behave?	2
To what extent do children adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do children contribute to the school and wider community?	1
How well do children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
Children's attendance and punctuality	3
What is the extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

The quality of the school's work

Adults work together effectively in teams to plan stimulating and exciting activities that make the most of children's enthusiasm to explore their surroundings. Resources are excellent and organised in an interesting way that provides the 'Wow!' factor in learning as children discover new things for themselves. The outstanding range of activities on offer in the outdoor area makes a significant contribution to children's personal, social and physical development. At times, adults miss opportunities to ask children questions that would help to extend their learning. More planned opportunities are needed to target children's learning in early reading, writing and number skills. Adults observe children's learning regularly, keep detailed notes on what they need to learn next, and compile the delightful 'special books' of children's experiences. The school has recognised the need for staff to operate systems in a similar way and to make sure that observations are sharp and consistent.

A significant strength of the school's work is the way it reaches out to families in need of support with, for example, advice on behaviour management or parenting skills. It draws on its outstanding partnerships with other agencies to do this. The school's home-school liaison team has achieved much success at improving the attendance of individual children through its work with their families. Bilingual assistants make an excellent contribution to children's learning of English by using the child's own language to help them take part in activities. They also help the school to communicate with parents who do not speak English to help them become involved in their child's learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets children's needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	1
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?	1
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's clear vision for the future of the school as a children's centre is shared equally by staff. Team work is strong. Staff are motivated and committed to helping to improve the lives of children. They work hard to overcome any barriers to learning so that all children have the chance to do well, often through making use of well established partnerships with local services and organisations. The school is a meeting place for people from the diverse community it serves. It provides them with workshops and courses that make a strong contribution to community cohesion.

A systematic approach to evaluating what the school does well and what it needs to

do better includes the views of parents who are surveyed each year. Increasingly sophisticated systems for tracking and measuring children's progress allow leaders to recognise and tackle any differences in the outcomes of different groups of children. Governors have a strong commitment to the school's work with families and have helped to shape the development of the extended services. However, their role in challenging the school's leaders lacks rigour; they are too reliant on information from the headteacher and staff.

These are the grades for leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed	2
Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for children	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	1
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Although only a small number of parents completed the inspection questionnaire, all expressed a high level of satisfaction in all aspects of the school's work. The school's own parental survey receives a good response. Parents say they feel well informed about events at the school and feel strongly involved in their child's learning. Parents attending the family learning course told the inspector how valuable this is in providing ideas that can be used at home with their child. They also valued the chance to spend quality time working closely with their child during the course.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its children's needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its children suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the children's work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which children are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the children's attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** an overall measure of the children's success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Children might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

4 December 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Old Church Nursery School

It was lovely to meet you when I came to visit your nursery. I really enjoyed looking at some of your 'special books'. Thank you for sharing them with me.

These things are good and made me smile:

- ☺ the way that you tidy up is brilliant
- ☺ you are all friends and get on well with each other
- ☺ you learn lots of new things each day
- ☺ you love nursery and all the things you do
- ☺ you are good at sharing and taking turns
- ☺ the grown-ups care for you and look after you very well
- ☺ you are learning how to stay healthy and keep safe.

I have asked the grown-ups to:

- make sure all of them help you to learn more while you play
- give you more practice in learning about sounds and letters, reading, writing and numbers.

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector

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