

# Ocean Children's Centre Incorporating Harry Roberts Nursery

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	100888
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	323367
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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.  
The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	104
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to under 3 years	26
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Mr John Singleton
Headteacher	Ms Jacqueline Priestley
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 May 2006
Date of previous childcare inspection	22 May 2006
School address	Commodore Street Stepney London E1 4PF
Telephone number	020 7790 6711
Fax number	020 7790 9706
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Age group	3–5
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by an additional inspector. The inspector visited the Nursery, the childcare provision and some of the extended services such as: the Toy Library; the baby massage; the crèche; and, the One o' Clock Club. The inspector met with members of the full management committee, the headteacher and senior staff. The inspector looked at a sample of the children's work and other documentation, including: the self evaluation forms, as prepared by each section of the organisation; their improvement plans; assessment information about children's development; and child protection and care information. The inspector received and analysed 57 parental questionnaires. Informal discussions with children and parents contributed to the evidence gained. In doing this, the inspector was aided by the help of school interpreters, so that the views of different groups could be considered. The inspector reviewed many aspects of the organisation's work and observed children's learning through a wide range of activities. In total, 36 different learning activities were seen and within this, the inspector focused in greater detail on ten activities. During these longer activities, the headteacher or other senior staff accompanied the inspector. The inspection looked in detail at the following:

- how well children, especially those learning English as an additional language, develop their language and communication skills
- how well children develop their personal skills
- the quality of teaching, especially to promote the children's language, personal development and mathematics
- exploring with leaders their evaluation of the effectiveness of the Children's Centre, incorporating the Nursery.

## Information about the school

The Centre is located in a part of East London that is undergoing many new developments, not least to improve housing. The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of a wide variety of provision within the Ocean Children's Centre. It opened in September 2006, following major building works. The Children's Centre offers family support, early education, child and family health services, childcare and training for adults in the community. Harry Roberts Nursery is part of the wider education provision. The Centre caters for children from birth to five years. Due to its charitable status, it has a management committee rather than a governing body. The majority of children are from Bangladeshi backgrounds but children from a wide range of other cultures and backgrounds, including Somali and White British, also attend the school. Many of the children are at an early stage of learning to speak English. A very high proportion receive free school meals.

## 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

The Children's Centre, which includes the day care, extended services and Nursery, provides a strong start to the children's education in an oasis of calm.

The most important strengths and areas for development are as follows

- As a result of good teaching and careful assessments of children's development, children make good progress, achieve well and enjoy learning.
- Outstanding links with parents and carers contribute greatly to children's progress and good community cohesion. Parents and carers have great confidence in all aspects of the provision.
- The outstanding care ensures that children are treated as unique individuals.
- There is a strong emphasis on promoting children's speaking skills. All children benefit, but especially those learning English as an additional language.
- Children's personal development is very good. Relationships are exemplary and help children to be happy, gain confidence and behave outstandingly well.
- From the children's often very low starting points, they develop quickly and many reach the expected level for four-year-olds by the end of the Nursery. Standards are not high enough in their mathematical development and this is an important area for improvement.
- At the core of this organisation lies good leadership, especially by the headteacher. Each part of the organisation evaluates its work well and this is aided by the effective work of the three deputies and a senior teacher. Some are quite new to their posts and are still developing their roles. Nonetheless, everyone knows the strengths and areas for development. In their drive to lift the quality of provision to be outstanding, they rightly want to ensure that learning is consistently excellent across all parts of the organisation.
- The work by the headteacher, the deputy headteachers and senior staff is good and aids the overall self-evaluation process well. Currently there are three self-evaluation forms, one for the Nursery, one for extended care and one for day care; the school is working to amalgamate these as part of the plans to integrate services as fully as possible. The provision of three deputy headteachers, one for each part of the organisation, and a senior teacher, is strengthening the development. There is a good capacity for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that children improve their mathematical skills as well as possible by extending opportunities and teachers' knowledge and confidence in helping children to develop their problem-solving, reasoning and calculation skills.
- Strengthen leaders' roles in integrating the services currently available, for the best possible benefit of children, parents and the wider community; this will include helping more learning in all settings to be consistently outstanding in the future.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

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When children join the Children's Centre, they have often had very little experience of playing with toys, socialising with other children and communicating with different adults. Throughout the provision as a whole, children's learning, achievement and enjoyment are good. As the headteacher so rightly says, 'Children soak up new things like sponges'. This was evident both when children worked hard to make their own little story books and when they keenly planted carrots, learning much about growth as they did this. Leaders are working to ensure the outcomes for children are more consistently outstanding in the future. This is because the learning, achievement and enjoyment are generally stronger (with more examples of outstanding learning) in the Nursery than in the wider day care and extended services provision.

Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress due to the high-quality care, effective teaching and interesting range of activities. Vulnerable children are very well supported and make good all-round progress.

Adults work effectively to help children to develop their personal skills very well. For example, they learn how to have fun, mix well with others, take turns, persevere and develop their concentration and independence. Their excellent behaviour is a direct result of clear expectations and very caring relationships. This aids their personal and emotional development well. Children keenly contribute to their community; as evident when gardening and when raising funds to buy a bike for a midwife in Guatemala.

The progress of all children is good and this is especially so for those learning English as an additional language. Most adults are helping children to enrich, develop and extend their speaking and listening by helping children to use new words and talk about their ideas in a fuller way. Adults often model language really well so that children hear the kind of sentences and vocabulary that explains what they are doing; this is good practice. Teachers are consistently skilled at this but some assistants are stronger at this than others. Adults encourage children to listen, investigate and talk; then sensitively build on what children say, to show them how to extend their skills. This high-quality bilingual support aids children's good achievement.

Children adopt healthy lifestyles well. They learn to eat healthily and by do plenty of physical exercise. They hopped, skipped and jumped with delight when 'working out' with the football coach. Older children often skilfully ride two-wheel bikes and all enjoy dancing and clambering on apparatus. Baby massage helps the youngest ones

to enjoy a sense of well-being.

As a result of the many positive features, by the time that the children leave the Nursery, many have the skills broadly expected in almost all areas of learning for four-year-olds. This shows their good and sometimes very good progress. However, attainment is not high enough in mathematical development.

*These are the grades for children's outcomes*

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Children's attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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
How well do children achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do children feel safe?	2
How well do children behave?	1
To what extent do children adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do children contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Children's attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
How well do children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

## How effective is the provision?

The inspection confirmed the Centre's view that the quality of teaching is good, although slightly variable between different parts of the organisation. A scrutiny of children's 'special books', the headteacher's monitoring of teaching and learning, together with the activities seen, also support the view that children have many opportunities to explore things for themselves by taking part in inside and outside activities. The provision outdoors has improved greatly since the last inspection, although the outside space in the childcare section is too cramped to fully exploit learning opportunities in the same way as is evident in the Nursery.

Assessment of what children know and can do and evaluations of their progress are good. The work of the 'key person' (the person with whom the child has the closest link in the setting), aids these assessments well. Adults know the children really well and make effective use of their assessments to plan the next steps of their learning.

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

A few assistants are not secure about how to make the best possible notes when watching children informally in their play.

Overall, adults organise their teaching groups and learning activities well, so that children can move freely between activities, while also having the chance to work more formally on special focus activities with an adult. Children have plenty of opportunities to develop their creative skills and gain a wider knowledge of the world. Children often have great fun on the occasions when teaching is outstanding, as evident when children collected herbs from the garden, and chopped and mixed them with oils to make massage cream. They liberally applied this to dolls while working and talking very cooperatively with each other.

Teaching is not quite as strong in promoting mathematical skills. For example, an able child could confidently count to 12 but opportunities were missed to check if that child actually knew how many objects are represented by each numeral. Equally, when doing a fishing activity, opportunities were also missed for children to find the numeral to go with the quantity of fish in their net and children were not asked if they knew how many one more or one less fish would be. Children are not being guided enough about how to do simple reasoning, problem-solving and addition to five. When making dough, children had great fun and adults helped the children to use interesting new words, such as, 'Squelch, squash, roll and knead'. However, they did not use this time to interweave counting skills for the 10 dough balls made.

The very high-quality care is threaded through all that is done and contributes greatly to children's individual learning, happiness and progress. The network of support and monitoring for vulnerable children and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very impressive. It reflects the high-quality child protection procedures and the staff's commitment to the children. As one carer noted, 'The care is very good, we are very happy'.

The high-quality care is enhanced by the fact that staff speak many different languages. This enables children to settle quickly and happily while also promoting a very strong partnership with parents and carers so that they work together for the best interests of the children. Support for bilingual learners is very impressive. For example children who speak little English were helped to understand the story of 'Ahh Stork' by using animal props while the teacher said the Bengali names and then got the children to join in with the English ones. Added to this, the skilful links between stories, reading and writing are very well developed and make learning meaningful to children. The link with letters and sounds, when other children made their own version of 'Ahh Stork' was very good. For example, children found and said the sounds for each animal when using magnetic letters. Children were keen to have a go at doing lots of writing. When asked, the children could accurately tell the inspector the sounds of different letters, such as 'S' for snake and 'C' for crocodile.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2

The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is right to be proud of the nurturing, purposeful and very caring ethos. As she says, 'We want children to have better life chances'. At the time of the last inspection, she was leading the Nursery very well. Since then, she was the driving force behind the development of the Children's Centre, with the helpful support of several members of the wider community and key senior managers. Since the last inspection, she has appointed three deputy headteachers and appointed a senior teacher. The headteacher has raised the quality of the assistants working in the school, so that the staffing level and skills are good and several practitioners are outstanding. This is aiding good achievement.

The headteacher gives very strong direction for the whole organisation. As a result, the recent requirement for promoting learning and care in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been fully implemented and contributes to children's good overall achievement. The high quality has been sustained in the Nursery and is developing very well in all other services. This transformation has been possible because of the rigorous monitoring of provision, high expectations and growing influence of tracking and assessment procedures.

The management committee give a firm steer to the developments of the provision and reflect the diversity of the people in the community. As one of the committee said, 'It has been very rewarding to be an active member of the committee'. They recognise that not all members are secure in their understanding about the attainment and progress made by children in all six areas of learning. Some of the management committee are very involved in helping to set the institutional development plan although a few are less involved than they could be.

At the moment, different parts of the organisation share very good common policies and procedures for promoting equal opportunities, children's behaviour and child protection arrangements. They are well on the way with developing a fully consistent approach to developing learning opportunities and assessing children's development. However, there is still more to do to make all policies common to join up the services for the best possible benefit to the children, parents, carers and the community.

Links with parents, through meetings, home visits, and general information and outreach services contribute greatly to children's good achievement, their enjoyment of school and their generally good attendance. Parents confirm that their children feel safe and nurtured and show respect for others.

There is a clear commitment to promoting cohesion within the community and they



actively check the needs of different groups. The inspector spoke personally to several parents and they confirmed this. These parents said that there is much respect and help for the community. For example, Bangladeshi and Somali women in particular asked for English lessons, so that they could access workplace skills. To facilitate this, a crèche and tutor were found.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

## Views of parents and carers

All parents have very considerable respect and praise for the work of the organisation. The proportion of questionnaires returned was high. Parents were especially pleased with the care provided and their children's enjoyment when attending. They are also impressed by children's behaviour and the leadership and management of the school. Almost all of the responses were very positive. Only a few had written comments and these all contained positive comments. The views of the parents interviewed confirm the positive response in the questionnaires. As one put it, 'The children are fantastic, friendly and happy'. Another noted, 'When we turn the corner of the street to get to school, he is so excited'. They confirm that their children love attending.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Harry Roberts Nursery to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we asked them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children. The inspector met parents and carers from the childcare and extended services informally during the visit.

The inspector received 57 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 96 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
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Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	96%	4%		
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## 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 2007-8, 15% 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 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children. In 2007-8, 32% 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 2007-8, 5% 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:** the progress and success of a child in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the child; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- 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.



20 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Ocean Children's Centre Incorporating Harry Roberts  
Nursery, London, E1 4PF

Thank you so much for helping me to have such a lovely time when I visited you. I can see why you enjoy the activities so much as you have lots of fun things to do. I enjoyed watching you playing and working. I was especially pleased to hear you talking to the adults and using new words. Well done to all of you who are only just beginning to learn to speak English. You are coming on quickly with this. You are learning lots of new things and this is good, as it means you will be ready for more learning later in the Reception classes. Your mums, dads and carers talk to your special helpers a great deal, this is very good. They told me that you are looked after very well and I agree that this is fantastic.

Well done for behaving so amazingly well. You are friendly, kind and try to help each other. Sometimes you work together very well. I noticed this when you collected the herbs and made perfumes and massage creams. Also, I could see that you like running around and doing lots of exercise – keep this up.

Your teachers and all of the adults do a great job and they want to do even better for you. Your headteacher is working especially hard on this and she is helped by the other adults. I have asked them to carry on with their good ideas and I want them to do two important things.

- Help you to do more counting activities.
- Get all of the adults to work very closely together to make your learning even better.

Keep having fun and try to work hard throughout your lives.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons  
Lead Inspector

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