

North Islington Nursery School and Children's Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100386
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	335536
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Taylor

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	0–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr I Charlesworth
Headteacher	Mr I Senior
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2007
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Age group	0–5
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors saw lessons taught by two of the teachers and 10 of the nursery support staff. They made 13 observations of lessons and spent 40% of the time observing children's learning. They held meetings with governors and staff as well as talking to parents who were bringing their children to school. Inspectors observed some of the work of the children's centre. They looked at a number of documents including attendance data, children's progress portfolios, local authority reports on the school, curriculum documents and safeguarding information. They analysed staff questionnaires and the 44 parental questionnaires received.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress that different groups of children make in their learning and personal development and the standards reached by children by the time they leave
- the consistency in teaching and provision in different parts of the school
- the contribution that leaders at different levels have on school improvement and evaluating the school's work.

Information about the school

North Islington Nursery and Children's Centre caters for children from the age of 3 months to five years. It makes provision for the youngest children in two adjoining rooms and for children from two and a half to five years old in two nursery classes. Around a third of children are allocated a full-time nursery place to help meet their additional needs. Others attend part time or take up extended provision to suit the needs of working families. In response to local need the nursery has recently reorganised provision so that it can take a larger number of children in the 0 to 3 age range than previously. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and with statements of special educational needs is higher than the national average. Children's needs include autism, physical disability, speech, language and communication difficulties and medical needs. Children in nursery come from a wide range of backgrounds. One in four are from homes where English is not the first language.

The children's centre provides flexible, fully integrated care and education on weekdays from 8.00am to 6.00pm for 48 weeks a year. It is also open on Saturdays and on one Sunday each month. A wide range of extended services are offered to children, their families and community members on a daily basis, including before- and after-school care, stay-and-play provision, crèche facilities, parent workshops and family support and healthcare.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

North Islington Nursery and Children's Centre is a satisfactory school. It has a very welcoming family ethos that parents particularly appreciate. As one rightly noted: 'The nursery provides a wonderfully caring environment.'

The school has experienced a number of significant challenges in the recent past, for example a period in temporary accommodation during a rebuild followed by the settling back into the new accommodation. In addition there has been long-term absence of two of its three teachers. This has led to some variations in the quality of teaching. This is why children's achievement and provision overall are judged satisfactory and are not as good currently as they were when the school was last inspected. That said, the provision for children in younger classes and that provided through extended day care are both outstanding. Furthermore, since the permanent teachers have very recently returned to work, there are clear signs that provision for the older children is beginning to improve.

The school provides good quality of care and support for all of the children, including some who are particularly vulnerable. Staff develop close and trusting relationships with children, recognise their individual personal needs, help them to settle into school well and ensure that they are safe and secure. Consequently, children are very happy in school, develop confidence and make firm friendships. They are not afraid to try new things and to take measured risks.

Babies and younger children attending the 0 to 30 months nursery classes get off to an excellent start in their learning and development. This is because the staff work extremely well as a team and because assessments and planning for children's learning and development are meticulous.

There are strengths in the provision for children in the older age range. For example, there is good attention to developing their enjoyment of books, their speaking skills and personal and social development. Children sometimes make good progress through purposeful adult-led activities. During independent work and play, however, there are not enough planned activities to ensure that all children are fully engaged, challenged and learn well. Consequently, some children tend to wander around without purpose, often quite happily, which staff do not always notice. Staff are also not deployed effectively enough to engage in children's play and independent work. Therefore, there are missed opportunities for them to assess and keep an overview of all children's learning and move it on at a faster rate.

The school is well led and managed. Leaders remain outward looking, inclusive and deeply committed to meeting the needs of families and the local community. Senior leaders and governors know the school's strengths and are proud of its success in recent

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years as it has developed into a thriving children's centre. Leaders are acutely aware that current provision is not as good as they want it to be. They have acted decisively to minimise disruption to children during a period of change and some uncertainty and ensured that addressing the relative weaknesses is a key priority. Taking account of the school's good leadership and the strong commitment of the staff, the nursery has a good capacity to improve, to continue to serve the needs of families and to engage those families who, as yet, are still hard to reach.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By January 2011 raise the quality of provision for the older children from satisfactory to good by ensuring that:
 - lesson planning is detailed, explicit about what children are expected to learn and outlines adults' role in securing children's progress
 - a greater number and wider range of challenging learning opportunities are planned each day
 - when children play and take part in independent activities the staff are proactive in interacting with children and moving their learning forward
 - staff are deployed more effectively to enable them to collectively keep an overview of all children's progress and to assess it more regularly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**3**

Children's achievement is satisfactory so that from broadly average skills on entry older children are on course to reach the early learning goals expected of them by the time they leave.

Children in the 0 to 30 months provision make exceptionally good progress in their learning and development. They enjoy a wide range of experiences matched to their age and needs. For example, as part of indoor activities children really enjoyed bathing the dolls, looking at books and lifting the flaps, exploring texture in different materials and playing with small world toys. Children's love of singing songs with actions was evident from their enthusiastic response, smiling faces and giggles. Outdoors, children make exceptionally good progress climbing, rolling and sliding. They 'take a walk' and look through the fence to explore what is happening outside.

Older children achieve well in their speaking and early reading skills and in their personal and social development. Progress across other areas of learning is currently inconsistent and sometimes haphazard. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, however, make good progress because they have excellent care plans and are well supported by staff and other children.

Most children attend regularly and are brought to school on time. They behave well and are keen to explore, play and learn. The youngest children quickly establish very trusting and affectionate relationships with their key workers, later gaining confidence to extend their relationships to other adults and children. Older children establish firm friendships,

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get on really well together and are very kind and thoughtful towards younger children and babies. They are proud of their achievements and respect the contributions that other children make. Children develop a good understanding of cultural diversity and life beyond school through the celebration of festivals, contributions from parents and visitors, as well as visits to local amenities, galleries and museums.

Children learn how to stay safe. They eat well, enjoying healthy snacks and nutritious school dinners. Older children understand the importance of washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet. Outdoors, children of all ages are often energetic and adventurous in their play.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Children's attainment ¹	3
The quality of children's learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
Children's behaviour	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Children's attendance ¹	3
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Provision for the younger children is expertly tailored to establishing routines and providing flexibility in meeting each child's learning and development needs. Activities each day are very well planned and build on what children have previously achieved and enjoyed. Regular opportunities are provided for rest and quiet times, small group work,

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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indoor and outdoor activities and times to 'come together'.

In the older classes, children are left to their own devices for too long without adult support and any meaningful evaluation of what children are learning. However, teaching and provision are improving. Some of the group work planned is effective in engaging and challenging the more able boys in particular. For example, children made good progress during a number activity that involved a lot of physical activity and searching outside for hidden number cards. Similarly, children were very engaged by work that developed the early skills of scientific enquiry and experimentation. Good, open-ended questions such as: 'What do you think will happen if?' and 'What have you found out?' challenged children of different abilities to think and to explore.

As part of the final phase of development of the children's centre, the spacious grounds are, within the next few weeks, to be completely revamped. This project has been thoroughly researched and planned so that the outdoors is set to become a very exciting place for children to work in.

Children are well cared for. They settle very quickly because staff work hard to find out about their interests, likes and dislikes before they join the nursery. High quality before- and after-school care makes a significant contribution to children's welfare, personal development and learning. It is very well planned to ensure a seamless transition for children from nursery and into extended school care. Children are cared for by known adults from the nursery and staff are very flexible and responsive to children's day-to-day needs, interests and energy levels at different parts of the day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school continues to be well led and managed. Safeguarding is good. Risk assessment and staff training, including that for child protection, are thorough.

The expansion of the governing body and leadership team in response to the development of the children's centre has brought a very wide range of additional specialist expertise into the school. Governors and leaders at different levels contribute well to school improvement, to evaluating its success and determining the next steps. Finances are managed well. The school's relatively high budget surplus represents long-term savings to develop the outdoor environment. In view of the satisfactory

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progress that children are making currently, value for money is satisfactory.

Good partnerships with local schools, institutions and service providers enable staff to exchange ideas and share expertise effectively. The school engages well with parents and carers and works well in partnership with them to support their children's learning and development. Very good links with external agencies, combined with the services offered through the children's centre, support parents and increasingly other community groups targeted to access support.

At the current time some of the older children are not receiving as good provision as the younger ones. However, this is being addressed successfully. The school remains inclusive and rigorous in its efforts to promote equality and tackle discrimination. Differences are valued and celebrated. Consequently, young children learn to take pride in who they are, and learn from and respect other's differences. This, combined with the way the school uses parents' diverse experiences, religious beliefs and backgrounds and its links with schools abroad, means that the nursery makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion.

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

Views of parents and carers

As the table below shows, the vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire are very pleased with and highly supportive of the school. Parents especially appreciate the way in which the school is led and managed and the way that

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the school cares for their children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at North Islington Nursery and Children's Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 76 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	68	13	30	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	73	12	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	36	25	57	3	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	55	18	41	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	57	16	36	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	41	22	50	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	45	21	47	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	13	30	24	54	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	47	20	45	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	41	21	47	0	0	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	47	18	41	0	0	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	33	75	10	23	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	68	12	27	2	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its children's needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
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

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a child in their learning and development.
Attainment:	in other phases of school, for example primary schools, attainment is the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. However, there is no national average for three- and four-year-olds. Therefore, in inspections of nursery schools, inspectors take account of expectations in the age-related bands of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
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.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in nursery sessions and over longer periods of time.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



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5 March 2010

Dear Children,

Inspection of North Islington Nursery and Children's Centre, London N4 3RB

I am writing you a letter to tell you what we found out when we visited your nursery. Thank you for talking to us, being kind to us and letting us look at your work. This is what we found.

- You behave really well and get on well with each other.
- You smile a lot because you are very happy in the nursery.
- You learn to do things you could not do before. Sometimes children learn quickly.
- The adults know and understand you well. They encourage you to do new things and to enjoy them too.
- Everyone in the nursery makes sure that you are very safe, happy and well looked after.
- Your headteacher and staff are always trying to make the nursery even better.

We have asked the staff in the older classes to plan more activities for you to do and to check your progress carefully so that you can learn even more. You can help by continuing to work hard and by taking good care of each other. You can also tell the staff which activities you enjoy and might like to do more of.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Taylor

Lead Inspector

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