

Chelsea Open Air Nursery School and Children's Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100474
Local Authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	335550
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2009
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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Maria Elena Arana
Headteacher	Mrs Kathryn Solly
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors made ten observations of children working on activities. They held meetings with governors and staff as well as talking to the children. Inspectors also spoke to parents who were bringing their children to school. They observed some of the work of the children's centre. They looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, attendance data, children's progress portfolios, local authority reports on the school, curriculum documents and safeguarding information, and staff and parental questionnaires.

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

- whether there are any variations in standards, progress and personal development for different groups of children
- how well provision is helping children to learn and to reach higher standards in communication, language and literacy
- the contribution that leaders at different levels make to school improvement and evaluating the school's work.

Information about the school

The school was opened in 1928 by Dr. Susan Isaacs. It became a children's centre in March 2006. The nursery provides 30 full-time places and 30 part-time places for children aged three to five. The children's centre provides additional day care within the nursery setting, as well as daily breakfast care, and after-school care and holiday provision for up to 16 children. The children's centre also provides a wide range of services for families and members of the community, including stay-and-play provision, work and study support, a parent forum, family support, healthcare and Portage provision.

Nursery children come from a wide range of backgrounds. Almost half of the children are from homes where English is not the first language. 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, learning difficulties, speech, language and communication difficulties and medical needs. The school has received a number of awards including the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Chelsea Open Air Nursery School and Children's Centre continues to provide an outstanding education and highly effective care and support for children and families. It fully deserves the excellent reputation it has earned, both within the local community and further afield.

Parents' views of the school are highly positive, noting: 'A fantastic place for children to grow!' and 'I feel privileged that my children have been given such a wonderful start to their life.'

There is a very warm welcome to all children and families in this highly inclusive nursery. Staff know children really well and are highly trained. They support all children very well and provide specialist help to those who need it. Therefore children feel safe, quickly develop confidence and love coming to school.

Teaching and the curriculum are outstanding. The strong focus on outdoor learning all year round and the 'expeditions' to places beyond the school are very special and very effective features of provision. Excellent teaching of the basics skills and the importance placed on children developing independence and a love of learning also help ensure that children of all abilities make outstanding progress and reach above- average standards by the time they leave.

Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher the school remains outward looking and reflective. This, combined with strong teamwork and practitioners' desire to continually train and develop as professionals, contributes strongly to the school's development. It has a thorough understanding of its strengths and of how it can continue to improve. Consequently the nursery has excellent capacity to sustain improvements, to continue to reach out to local families and to those who, as yet, are still hard to reach.

Despite its continued success the school is not complacent. Senior leaders recognise that staff would benefit from further opportunities to observe each other's practice so as to share the wide range of specialist expertise further. Inspectors also agree with the school's view that enabling all staff to develop links with other schools and professionals further afield would enable this already outstanding school to continue to disseminate good practice, challenge itself and further its own practice.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for staff to observe each other teaching, so as to share their expertise.

- Extend opportunities for all staff to engage with practitioners in other schools.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Although children enter nursery with a wide range of skills, these are overall below the levels usually found because a relatively high proportion of children have additional needs. There are no differences in the progress made by different groups. All children make outstanding progress in their learning and development because provision is carefully tailored to challenge them and to meet their individual needs.

Children attend regularly and are happy to wave goodbye to their parents and carers. Their thorough enjoyment of learning through exploration and play is clearly evident. For example, following a visit from the Fire Service some children were observed working intently exploring the features and movement in toy fire engines. Others were dressing up as fire fighters, enthusiastically transporting ladders, putting out fires, rescuing friends from 'burning' buildings and cats from the tops of trees! Children also learn very well when taught in small groups, developing their knowledge of shapes, retelling stories, practising mark-making, investigating and planting bulbs and using the laptops. Their artwork and role-play activities provide perfect examples of the children's ability to sustain concentration and to respond creatively.

Behaviour is excellent because children are engrossed in learning. They listen well, respond willingly to instructions and are very happy to help. They are very proud of their achievements and respect the contributions that other children make. The delightful family atmosphere at lunchtimes when children eat together and chat with one another and staff is a typical example of the excellent relationships that permeate the centre. Children understand the need to be kind to others and they learn to take turns, to negotiate and to compromise. This was evident when watching a small group of determined girls independently playing 'mums, dads, babies and cats'. When another child wanted to join in and to be a cat, much discussion took place about this not being possible, as there was already a cat. However, she could be a dog. Following a great deal of debate a resolution was reached; she would join in, she was not going to be a dog, but she would be a puppy!

Children learn how to stay safe and healthy, how to take care of their teeth, to wash their hands before eating, and after using the toilet. Outdoors they are highly energetic and adventurous when, for example, dancing, jumping, running and climbing. Children's confidence, their very good approach to learning and excellent social skills mean they are very well prepared for primary school by the time they leave.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

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

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

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

How effective is the provision?

The school has deservedly achieved a number of awards in recognition of its outstanding curriculum provision. Provision meets a wide range of abilities very well. Gifted and talented children are challenged, as for example when seen working with Philosophy Bear they begin to think deeply and to answer 'how', 'why' and 'where' questions. Provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding. Children with highly complex needs receive expert teaching and care. Through timely intervention and support children are encouraged to develop independence and to join in activities with others, knowing that help is close at hand if and when it is needed. The school is also adept at ensuring that children new to learning English are well supported.

One parent quite rightly noted that 'Staff here give a hundred and ten per cent every single day!' Without exception the nursery staff are highly skilled practitioners who have excellent knowledge of how young children learn best. Excellent planning and teaching, probing questioning, quiet persistence and a good deal of praise and reinforcement ensure that learning is not merely an option for the children, but a requirement and an entitlement.

Key workers and staff have in-depth knowledge of each child's interests and what they need to learn next. They regularly plan activities together that will engage all children and address each individual's needs. Assessments of children's day-to-day learning, progress and development are meticulous. A particular strength is that children's

learning in the nursery, at breakfast club, after-school club and holiday-club are all assessed and recorded in the same way. This enables the staff to build up an extensive picture and portfolio of each child's achievements across each area of learning.

The recent focus on strengthening the teaching of early reading and writing skills, so as to extend more able children, is proving to be very effective. Consequently all children are being challenged, regularly enjoy books, mark-making, retelling stories and describing events.

Inspectors understand why a parent wrote, 'I feel at peace knowing I am leaving my child in a safe and secure environment.' The nursery provides exceptionally good care for the children and their families. Children settle very quickly because staff work hard to find out about their family members, interests, likes and dislikes before they join nursery. Staff then plan activities that will quickly engage children and help them feel at home. Similarly, the school works hard to prepare children for transfer to the next school, by taking them on visits, taking photographs and making books that children can then explore so as to become familiar with the staff and their new surroundings beforehand. Extended services provided by the children's centre, as well as excellent links with external agencies, also support children and families to access any additional help they need.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Colleagues very accurately describe the headteacher as 'passionate about children and families' and 'driven to make a difference'. All staff are fully committed to the headteacher's vision and to constantly striving for improvement. More recently appointed leaders, following the expansion of the children's centre, contribute very well to leading the school, evaluating its success and determining the next steps. Governors are proactive and very well informed and bring a wide range of skills to the school. They support and challenge the school very effectively and make regular visits to see how well it is doing.

Engagement of and partnership with parents and carers from a wide range of backgrounds is outstanding. Staff encourage parents to share their skills and experiences. They involve them in assessing their own child's progress and work with them to support their children's learning and development.

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

The school is rigorous and highly effective in its efforts to promote equality and tackle discrimination. Differences are not just accepted in Chelsea Open Air Nursery, they are welcomed, explored, highlighted and celebrated. Consequently young children learn to take pride in who they are and to learn from others' differences. Safeguarding is excellent. Risk assessment and staff training, including that for child protection, are thorough and highly effective.

The nursery has excellent links and partnerships with other schools and institutions locally. The headteacher also has also forged well-established partnerships with other schools and institutions across the UK and abroad. Children and staff in the nursery benefit greatly from such partnerships because visits, as well as visitors to the centre, help bring a fresh perspective, new ideas and resources. They also prompt joint research projects, which lead to improved practice. These partnerships, as well as the work of the nursery and children's centre overall, also make an excellent contribution to developing shared understandings and promoting community cohesion at all levels.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school and judge it to be very effective. They especially appreciate the exciting activities on offer, the strong teaching and the fact that staff know children very well and care for them very well. Nearly all think that the school is well led and managed and are happy with

the way the school involves parents. Inspectors endorse parents' positive views.

A very small minority are not as happy with some aspects the school. The main concern expressed in the questionnaires related to the fact that a few parents had not as yet had a meeting with their child's key worker, owing to staff illness. Inspectors judged that while this was unfortunate, it was also unavoidable. Inspectors also noted that all of the staff play a key role in supporting and teaching children so that the impact of any staff absence had been minimal for children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Chelsea Open Air Nursery School 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 60 children registered at the school. As the table below shows the vast majority of parents are very pleased with and highly supportive of the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	83	6	15	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	81	7	17	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	72	9	53	1	2	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	78	8	20	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	34	83	6	15	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	68	10	24	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	71	11	27	0	0	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)	25	61	13	32	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	68	12	30	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	66	13	32	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	66	13	32	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	83	6	15	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	88	4	10	1	2	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.



21 November 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Chelsea Open Air Nursery, 51 Glebe Place, London SW3 5JE

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. Your mums, dads and carers think the nursery is excellent and we agree.

What we liked most:

- You behave really well and work very hard.
- You smile a lot because you are very happy in the nursery.
- You make excellent progress and learn to do lots of things you could not do before.
- The staff make sure there are lots of different and really exciting activities for you to do indoors and outside.
- The adults know and understand each and every one of you really well. They take notice of what you like to do and make sure they give you time to do it. They also 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 lead the school really well and are always trying to make it even better.

We think the nursery does everything really well. We know that the staff plan to make it even better by giving adults more time to share their ideas and to learn from each other and from adults in other schools.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Taylor

Lead Inspector

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