

Alice Model Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100887
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	335613
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Amanda Hutt
Headteacher	Mrs Lynn Cottle
Date of previous school inspection	8 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. In total, 20 different learning activities were observed. Meetings were held with three governors, the headteacher and other staff. The inspectors looked at a sample of the children's work as seen in their 'Special Books' and displays and looked at assessment records. Other documentation was also scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation evidence, development plan and child protection and care information. Altogether, 52 parental questionnaires were received and analysed. Informal discussions were held with the children and parents.

The inspection looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum in helping children to develop their language and communication skills, especially for children learning English as an additional language
- how well problem-solving is being promoted
- the main reasons why outcomes for children may be outstanding.

Information about the school

Children attend either part or full time. The setting is located in a very culturally diverse area of East London. A very high proportion of children are at an early stage of learning to speak English when they join the school. Many speak Sylheti and 13 other languages are spoken. A high proportion of children receive free school meals and there are high levels of unemployment among some parents. A high proportion of families experience some considerable challenges in their lives. The school has an above-average proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These children's needs most often relate to difficulties with language and communication, or more occasionally physical difficulties, which include such things as visual impairment. A few children have autistic spectrum disorders. The school has received two Quality Marks, the most recent in 2008, in recognition of the improvement in standards. It also has a travel plan award and a good financial management award.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Alice Model Nursery is an outstanding school. Parents value the work of the school enormously and work in close partnership with the staff to help their children to have a flying start to their early education. Almost every aspect of the school's work is outstanding. In particular the outcomes, including achievement, are outstanding.

The inspectors explored in detail the reasons for the school's very considerable success and found that there are many interweaving strengths in the school that feed into the school being so fantastic. However, at the core of this highly successful school is very good leadership and a continuous drive to improve the curriculum, teaching and learning so that they are focused precisely on the needs of the individual children. As a result, children thrive and blossom in their skills and confidence. Relationships are excellent. Children have many opportunities to learn through exciting play and investigation-based activities. This leads to children learning how to socialise, cooperate and communicate very well with others. The superb work to help children to grow in their confidence and skills to speak with others underpins the school's success. These features play a major part in why standards of attainment are higher than expected by the time that they leave the Nursery. Standards have risen very well since 2002 and especially so between 2007 and 2009.

The school is firmly committed to nurturing children and their families and to providing an inclusive community. This was the original guiding principle when the school was established by the East End social reformer Alice Model in 1897. This ethos continues extremely well to this day and is evident in very well-established community cohesion and the outstanding care, guidance and support provided.

Leaders are constantly looking for ways to fine-tune the school. The very effective self-evaluation aids the school's outstanding capacity to improve. Thorough analysis of children's progress, standards and overall provision means that the improvement plan focuses very sharply on exactly what needs to be done to maintain the constant thrust for development. Staff are focusing on further developing children's understanding of letters and sounds and their ability to think hard to solve problems. While good, these areas of work are already good but not as exceptional as other aspects of provision. Work has begun to integrate even more of these skills into play and investigation activities, but some opportunities are occasionally missed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable children to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills by integrating this aspect of learning as often as possible into activities.

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- Ensure that staff spontaneously weave more use of letters and sounds into children's play, writing and investigation activities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children's eyes light up each day when they see the fantastic activities available. They have great fun at school. Children attend regularly but often suffer from the normal early childhood illnesses; this is why attendance is average. From children's often low-level skills on entry, especially in language and communication, they make rapid progress. All groups do equally well, including those learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Children behave amazingly well because they are absorbed in what they do and are helped to feel proud of their efforts.

Children learn to speak with confidence and have an excellent understanding about how to adopt healthy and safe lifestyles. When making individual pizzas they described, with the outstanding help of the teacher, the texture, taste and smell of the ingredients and talked about how to be healthy and safe when cooking. As one child said, 'This dough's warm, soft, squishy and bouncy; it's like your skin!'

Children love to write and often show a sense of wonder in what they do as seen when they explored how a hyacinth bulb grows. They know about different faiths and cultures and were excited about getting ready to celebrate Eid. Children quickly learn to count and talk about different shapes and sizes. They do plenty of simple addition and subtraction, as seen when they helped 'George the Bear' with his counting and when slicing and sharing their pizzas. Despite the cramped outside learning area, children are keenly getting fit. They like running and clambering and using the specially designed children's mini-gym equipment. They thoroughly enjoy their weekly swimming lessons.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

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

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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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 Taking into account: Children's attendance ¹	1
	3
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make sure that children learn by doing exciting activities. The very skilful way that adults model language, ask questions and engage children in conversations very successfully promotes children's use of new words and longer sentences. This work is aided by the very impressive use of resources and visits. Teachers are always looking to modify the curriculum and activities so that they interest and challenge the children. For example, one child asked to make a huge junk model castle. The teacher facilitated this and, in addition, provided dressing-up clothes and other resources for role play. The teacher's very high-quality interventions resulted in exciting, imaginary and cooperative play that lasted for over an hour. Learning was further extended when the teacher read a book to the children about different castles, which inspired the children to make a drawbridge. Teaching is almost consistently outstanding, but opportunities are occasionally missed to extend problem-solving. This was evident when children explored how to get balls quickly along a flat drainpipe into a hoop. Here, they were not helped enough to experiment with the height and angle of the drain pipe. Teachers provide many exciting writing activities, but opportunities to extend their learning of letters and sounds are also occasionally missed, as seen when children made gingerbread men recipe books and the adult missed the chance to build on links between 's' when talking about the syrup, which was sticky and sloppy on the spoon.

Children are given excellent guidance and support. Links with support services are very impressive. The support for children who are learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is exemplary. Children are linked with a special adult (key person) who keeps a watchful eye on children's needs and progress and who is responsible for making superb 'Special Books' with the children about their achievements, which contribute to high self-esteem.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
	1

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	
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?

The headteacher quietly, calmly and passionately leads the school. She is very well supported by the whole team and through excellent governance. Everyone has ownership and understanding of the children's development. Safeguarding and care are excellent. Everyone is thoughtful and highly professional in ensuring that all of the very well-organised procedures are diligently carried out. Staff work in very close partnership with parents and others. They share best practice with other schools.

The school has been on a step-by-step pathway to improvement since 2002 when it was found to be inadequate. The current headteacher joined the school before the last inspection, when the school was found to be good. She has successfully led the school to its now extremely successful position. Leaders drive developments very well to ensure that they have a positive impact on children's progress. Monitoring is excellent and this leads to modifications of the curriculum, teaching and learning, so that it is tailored precisely to children's individual needs and interests. Inclusion and equal opportunities are stunningly well promoted. Every child really matters. The 'Graduation' ceremony demonstrates this, as each child receives an award for their special talents and progress. Children leave the school with very high aspirations for the future.

Differences in faith, culture and social backgrounds are shared so that the community works in exceptional harmony and the fullest respect is shown for all. As one parent commented, 'It is lovely to share Eid with children from different cultures and this demonstrated true integration.' The school provides diversity workshops and involves parents and children in many visits, which helps everyone to appreciate the diversity of Britain. Links with a school in Dover and another in New York further aid awareness. Governors check the impact of the school's work very carefully.

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 Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
	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

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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

Parents have very positive views of the school. They almost unanimously agree that everything in the school is very positive. They say that their children are safe and they are kept well informed about what goes on and their children's progress. All speak highly about the leadership and agree that the quality of teaching is impressive so that their children make quick progress. Inspectors received many additional positive comments about the school. As one parent commented, 'Alice Model is a model school. My daughter is so happy here and as a mother in a demanding job I feel totally secure about her care. This school is what all schools should be based on. Standards and support are exceptional.' Another wrote, 'My son's speech particularly has improved in a short space of time.' Another said, 'I have been impressed by every aspect of the school ' imaginative play set-ups, great trips out, kind staff, and excellent parent involvement schemes.' Inspectors confirm the many strengths that parents have identified.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Alice Model Nursery 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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, at the time of the inspection, there were 75 children registered at the school. The percentages below link to the number of questionnaires returned to inspectors.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	69	15	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	67	16	31	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	52	24	46	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	54	23	44	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	63	17	33	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	50	23	44	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	42	27	52	2	4	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)	21	40	27	52	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	54	23	44	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	46	27	52	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	37	32	62	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	62	19	37	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	69	15	29	0	0	1	2

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.



26 November 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Alice Model Nursery, Stepney E1 4NQ

Thank you so much for helping us to have such a lovely time when we visited your Nursery. It was wonderful to see you so busy and having fun. We were thrilled that you were so keen to tell us about what you were doing.

You have lots of exciting things to do. We enjoyed watching you playing and working. We were especially pleased to hear you talking to the adults, using new words and playing so nicely with the other children. You are learning lots of new things really quickly because you go to a fantastic Nursery; the adults call this 'outstanding'. Your mums and dads also think it is great. Well done for behaving so amazingly well. You are friendly, kind and work together. I noticed this when you were making your castle out of boxes and when making your yummy pizza! I could see that you like running around and doing lots of exercise ' keep this up and well done for eating lots of healthy food! It was lovely to see you getting ready for your Eid party and I hope that it went well ' and good luck with your Nativity play.

Your teachers and all of the adults do a great job. They want to do even better for you. I have asked them to carry on with their fantastic ideas so that you:

- get to know more letters and sounds when doing all sorts of fun activities
- think hard to find ways to solve problems when doing different things.

Thank you for showing us your 'Special Books', photographs and the work on the walls. A long time ago a Lady called Alice Model set up the Nursery. She would have been so proud of you all and your teachers. Please say a huge thank you to your headteacher, all of the other adults and your mums and dads because they are helping you to make your Nursery a very special place ' well done to you all!

Yours sincerely

Wendy Simmons

Lead inspector

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