

Oliver Thomas Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102706
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	335952
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Jo Curd

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	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Piraparahan
Headteacher	Dianne Walls
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Fourteen learning opportunities were observed involving 17 different members of staff. Inspectors spoke with parents and carers, children, staff, and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, minutes of meetings held by the governing body, assessment records, planning, local authority reports and 135 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

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

- outcomes for all groups of children, especially in information and communication technology and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy as the school had identified these as areas for development
- the effectiveness of the curriculum, particularly provision for information and communication technology and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy
- how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate provision and outcomes
- the effectiveness of policies and procedures to safeguard children's health and safety.

Information about the school

Oliver Thomas Nursery School is part of an integrated Surestart Children's Centre including breakfast, lunch and after school clubs. These will be inspected fully at a later date. It is based in a purpose built, single-storey building in the middle of a high density inner-city environment. Over 90% of the children are from minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly of Tamil descent. Over 90% of children are at very early stages of speaking English. The proportion of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with most other schools although the needs of a few children are more profound than found in most other schools. Most of the needs are linked with speech, language and communication. The deputy headteacher took over leadership of the nursery for six months last year when the headteacher was seconded to support another local authority nursery. There has been turbulence of staff recently with temporary arrangements in place to cover eight staff on long-term leave.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Children's achievement is good because teaching is effective and children engage in a very wide range of activities. Children enjoy the nursery and develop excellent attitudes to health. Visual expressions, verbal comments and demeanours show how very safe they all feel due to excellent relationships and the outstanding care they all receive. Relationships are warm and encouraging and all the children are supported particularly well by staff and through excellent partnerships with other professionals. The nursery has an outstanding impact on community cohesion locally, nationally and internationally through raising awareness of cultures and faiths and bringing a very diverse range of people together in a highly effective way. Engagement with parents and carers is outstanding and helps them to become more involved in their children's learning in the nursery and elsewhere. The vast majority of those who responded to the inspection questionnaire were positive about all that the nursery offers. One expressed the views of most in saying: 'The staff at Oliver Thomas all show an incredible attention to my child and I cannot fault the care they show. Their love of learning and children shows each and every day. This is a truly special place.'

Leaders have spent a considerable time recently developing and evaluating the Children's Centre which provides extensive, very positive opportunities for children and families. Clubs during, before and after school contribute to excellent levels of care and support. Parent and carer classes, including 'English as a second language' and 'Helping your child to read' are used well and appreciated. Contacts with families and very young children help in the early identification of any additional needs and children's preparation for nursery and contribute to a noticeable rise in the knowledge, skills and understanding with which children start nursery. They have spent time ensuring that the nursery remains as settled as possible during this period of staff absence. Given these challenges, leaders and managers have done well to maintain good outcomes, including achievement, excellent levels of care, engagement with parents and carers, partnerships with other agencies and community cohesion. They use their good understanding of the nursery to tackle weaknesses and drive improvement. However, their self-evaluation is slightly over positive as they do not always monitor or evaluate work in the nursery sufficiently closely. There have been inconsistencies in teaching and staff do not always focus their input or activities sufficiently well on helping all children make the next steps in their learning, especially in information and communication technology. Although they keep copious assessment records, they do not always use these sufficiently effectively. Many members of the governing body are new. Although they are now keen and ready to take a more active and challenging role they have not assumed this role fully. Along with the strong commitment of nursery staff, leaders, parents and carers, and value for

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money, the capacity to sustain improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by ensuring that input and activities always focus on and provide sufficient challenge to help children achieve the next steps in learning, especially in information and communication technology.
- Ensure leaders and managers, including the governing body, monitor and evaluate all aspects of the nursery, including teaching, to ensure these are always as good as possible for all groups.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

2

Although children come into nursery with a highly variable range of knowledge, skills and understanding, these are generally well below those expected for this age. They all make good progress and knowledge and skills are broadly in line with expectations for this age by the time they leave. Progress in personal, social and emotional development is particularly good as spiritual, moral, social and especially cultural development is good and children gain relatively high levels of independence and confidence. Children learning English as an additional language make good progress and benefit from the wide range of practical visual tasks and some small targeted support groups. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with particularly profound needs, make good progress and benefit greatly from outstanding care and excellent links with other professionals. During the inspection, groups of children were particularly engaged in dressing up in traditional African clothes, playing African drums and dancing to African music outside. Although they developed their physical and creative skills along with their knowledge and understanding of the world well in this highly enjoyable and practical activity, teaching was not sufficiently well focused to ensure progress was outstanding. Although most children helped well with tidying up, contributing well to their nursery and extending their personal and social skills, not all were as engaged as they could be and achievement for some was slowed. Progress in information and communication technology is slightly slower because children have insufficient opportunities to use computers and other relevant resources.

Children develop excellent attitudes to health and safety. One boy took the initiative to get a clean fork when he accidentally dropped his on the floor at lunch time. Children develop a very good awareness of the need for balanced diets and exercise, keenly engaging in energetic outdoor play, dance and sport. They learn to take risks sensibly, carefully using a wide range of equipment and tools, such as scissors to cut out shapes and knives for cooking. They contribute well to their wider community by raising large amounts of money for charity. Occasionally, adults do too much for them, such as too much tidying up and providing answers without challenging children themselves. Children behave well even though some children find this difficult. They are well prepared for later life and learning because attendance is good. They relate well with a very diverse range of others and develop high levels of independence and confidence,

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even though basic skills in communication, language and literacy and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy remain broadly in line with expectations for their age.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Children's attainment ¹	3
The quality of children's learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which children feel safe	1
Children's behaviour	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Excellent levels of care and support help children's progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development, and health and safety. Children with additional needs are identified early and supported well. Highly effective engagement with parents and carers and partnerships with other agencies contribute extremely well to this. Staff know children and families well and relationships are very warm and supportive. Extended care, including the breakfast, lunch and after-school clubs and fortnightly child, parent and carer clubs on Saturdays, provides additional opportunities and support way beyond nursery sessions themselves. Support and advice in helping children's moves into nursery and then onto primary school are thorough and extensive. Systems to support attendance and punctuality are effective. Children are very settled and develop high levels of confidence and independence. One parent commented that, "My daughter

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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considers the nursery as home away from home.'

Children engage in a very wide range of activities, including football with specialist coaches, swimming, theatre trips, African and South American drumming work shops, drama and Asian dance, through the nursery's broad and diverse curriculum and after-school extra-curriculum clubs. Provision for problem solving, reasoning and numeracy has improved and is good because staff make a concerted and effective effort to include mathematical language and concepts in a wide range of practical activities. Provision for information and communication technology is developing well but is still at relatively early stages and is not incorporated sufficiently frequently or regularly by all staff. Although activities outside cover all areas of learning, staff do not always provide sufficiently well-focused challenge or input to help children make as much progress as they could.

The biggest focus of planning and teaching is on providing a wide range of activities that are suitable for all the children and interacting with them. Staff do this well and care for them excellently. Sessions are well organised, allowing opportunities in a wide range of activities indoors and outdoors. They frequently record their assessments of children and keep copious assessments on them. This helps their understanding of children and contributes to excellent care. However, they do not always use assessments sufficiently well to focus their input and challenge to help children make the next steps in their learning and progress is consequently good rather than outstanding.

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
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers have successfully maintained a committed and ambitious ethos among staff despite recent changes and challenges. They have been particularly successful in creating very cohesive relationships and provision with staff in the relatively new Children's Centre to the benefit of all children and families at the centre. Nursery leaders have closely monitored and evaluated all this new provision which has been of benefit to community cohesion. They have used rigorous discussions on this to further improve work within the centre, locally, nationally and internationally. A particularly notable piece of work was in the development and presentation of a nativity play at Christmas. Parents and carers sent the positive publicity this attracted locally and

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nationally to relatives and friends across the world to build bridges and improve cultural awareness. Evaluation of this has led the nursery to produce a Diwali play that contributes to good cultural development of all. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and progress are not always sufficiently frequent or thorough to ensure this is always as good as possible, particularly given the high number of short-term changes in staff recently. Systems for safeguarding children's health and safety are thorough and robust. Staff are highly committed to the well-being of all and the governing body has covered all its statutory duties even though it does not often monitor or review procedures first hand. Leaders are highly committed to each individual child and family, and provision is good for all. However, they do not monitor or evaluate outcomes for different groups sufficiently thoroughly to ensure that equal opportunities are always as good as possible.

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	3
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire are positive about all aspects investigated. The most positive responses were to questions about children's enjoyment of school and the quality of teaching. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns. The highest number of concerns, albeit a very small minority, were about advice for how to support children at home, encouragement for children to lead healthy lifestyles, preparation for later life

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and learning and meeting children's particular needs. Inspectors found no evidence to support such concerns. Written comments expressed concerns about progress and safety. Inspection evidence confirmed that children are safe but do not always make as much progress as possible.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Oliver Thomas 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 135 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 180 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	108	80	24	18	2	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	88	65	41	30	3	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	70	52	56	41	4	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	71	53	57	42	3	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	88	65	42	32	2	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	69	51	55	41	6	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	62	46	62	46	6	4	1	1
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)	58	43	61	45	5	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	64	47	61	45	5	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	69	51	56	41	4	3	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	66	49	60	44	3	2	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	71	53	50	37	3	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	99	73	31	23	1	1	2	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



12 June 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Oliver Thomas Nursery School, East Ham, London E6 6BU

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful to us when we visited your school recently. It was lovely to see you playing and working so busily on such a wide range of activities. We particularly liked seeing the way your sessions are structured so that you can work in your own classrooms, outside and across the whole school.

We agree with your parents and carers that you have a good nursery. Things we thought were particularly good include:

- the excellent way you are all cared for and looked after
- the very wide range of activities you do even though you do not always have enough opportunities to use information and communication technology, such as computers
- the number of visits you make, such as to the theatre and different places of worship, and visitors you have, such as health workers and puppet shows
- the way activities use the language and ideas of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, such as number and shape.

We have asked your leaders to do two things to make your Nursery even better:

- focus activities and teaching on helping you make the next steps in your learning, especially in information and communication technology
- look at activities and teaching more carefully and often and ask lots of questions about them to make sure they are always as good as possible for you all.

Perhaps you could help by continuing to behave well and trying as hard as you can in all you do.

With best wishes to you and your families

Yours sincerely

Jo Curd Lead Inspector

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