

Spencer Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102955
Local Authority	Sutton
Inspection number	335991
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Natalia Power

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Cook
Headteacher	Fiona Downing
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2008
School address	Spencer Road Mitcham CR4 4JP
Telephone number	020 86484126
Fax number	020 86487941
Email address	fdowning@suttonlea.org

Age group	3–5
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2010
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**Number of children on roll in the registered
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed the teacher and the early years educators in both the indoor and outdoor learning areas in six sessions. Inspectors talked to governors, staff and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's safeguarding procedures, its tracking of children's progress, the school development plan, minutes of the governing body, and curricular planning. They analysed 44 questionnaires submitted by parents and carers.

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

- the quality of provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the effectiveness of the school's governance
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in monitoring the quality of teaching.

Information about the school

The school provides a mixture of full-time and part-time provision for children from three months to five years for 50 weeks in the year. Under-threes are accommodated in the 'Mini Macs' room and garden, and the older children in the 'Seniors' room and outdoor play areas. When children leave the school, they transfer to the Reception Year in a range of primary schools. Almost half of the children come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, and nearly all are confident in speaking English. A lower than usual proportion have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school forms part of a Sure Start Children's Centre, which is managed by the governing body, and which is subject to separate inspection. The school has gained Healthy Schools status.

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

- The hallmark of the school is the exemplary care it offers to all children, both the under-threes and the three- to five-year-olds, identifying and addressing their needs fully. One parent commented: 'The staff frequently demonstrate how well they know my child by the comments we receive when we collect her from school; this speaks volumes to me about the high quality care she receives.'
- The school is completely safe and protected. In this secure environment the children develop many outstanding personal qualities. They are kind and affectionate towards one another, and this reflects their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy life and fully understand how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is good, and the children enjoy their work and achieve well. They make good progress in mastering basic skills. They are encouraged to make decisions about what they are going to learn, and this enables them to grow in confidence. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to extend children's learning through stimulating questioning. The school recognises that not all teaching is of the level of the very best, and accepts the need to develop a more robust programme of classroom monitoring.
- The wealth of tasks offered to the children, both indoors and outdoors, are designed to stimulate their curiosity and extend their learning. Adults ensure that resources are continually replenished to maintain the children's freshness of interest. While storytelling and role playing are strengths of the curriculum, the school recognises that there are currently too few opportunities for children to learn through music.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of their school and their planning for the future is focused on the right priorities. They have made good progress towards tackling the point for development from the last inspection, and the children's centre is making an increasingly important contribution to the community. These factors show that the school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To move teaching from good to outstanding, sharpen up the monitoring of teaching and learning by giving all staff clear and continuing feedback, in particular to improve the quality of questioning to extend children's learning.

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- Ensure that children develop a better sense of rhythm and harmony through greater access to music-making.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**1**

'My child has come a long way in her learning.' This comment from one parent reflects the good progress made by the children in their learning. The children enter the Nursery with skills and aptitudes which are varied but generally typical of those expected for three-year-olds. By the time they leave, all have made good progress in their learning and the attainment levels seen during the inspection were consistently above average. For example, the under-threes enjoyed having their faces painted to reflect national flags, and learned about different countries through observing their own and other children's designs. The older children love the fast-paced game of identifying 'tricky word' cards, and some are able to read the word 'you' hidden in the longer word 'your', indicating that they are reading, rather than recognising shapes. In the best sessions led by adults, expectations are high and children live up to them. For example, a simple birthday celebration gives children the opportunity to count to five and to show different ways of showing five on their fingers. They also learn to socialise and greet one another, and to wait their turn to speak. There are no differences in the progress made by different ethnic groups and all children achieve well. The very few children at an early stage of learning English receive focused support in their play-based activities and make good progress. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive outstanding support and make good progress in step with others.

Reflecting the Healthy Schools status gained by the school, children fully understand the importance of a healthy diet, and tell adults that salad, pasta and milk are good for them. They also understand the need to avoid sweets and to brush their teeth, otherwise, as another child commented, 'You have to go to the dentist.' Children feel completely safe. For example, they understand the need to wear a helmet when riding their bicycles in the outdoor play area, otherwise, as one child explained, 'You might bump your face or your head.' In this safe and supportive environment, children from all backgrounds play well together. They are encouraged to take responsibility for one another, for instance by teaching other children how to use the sand-timer. This focus on cooperation ensures that they behave exceptionally well, and are ready to share and take turns in using toys and equipment. Children make a good contribution to their community, for example through growing their own vegetables, and the older children regularly help the younger ones in the under-threes' classroom. Children gain a good grounding in language and number skills, which prepares them well for the next stage in their schooling and later life.

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.

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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	2
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	1
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	1

How effective is the provision?

One parent commented: 'The staff are always enthusiastic and cheerful.' All the adults are warm and caring. The focus on child-initiated activities promotes good independent learning, and there is always an adult at hand to provide support. For example, a group of under-threes were entertained with a story while waiting for their lunch, and children enjoyed pointing out pictures in response to the adult's questioning. In the best teaching, children's learning is extended through high quality questioning. In one activity, for example, children were engaged in channelling water from a higher receptacle to a lower one. The teacher challenged them to work out how to return the water from the lower to the higher receptacle. A practical lesson in making porridge, based on the children's reading of the Goldilocks story, reinforced their understanding of the concepts of different sizes and tastes. The children were shown the difference between dry oats and cooked porridge and, through effective questioning, were encouraged to begin to think about the science behind cookery. In such lessons, the children are enthralled by the activity and make fast progress in their learning. Occasionally, however, opportunities are missed to extend children's learning, and some teaching is less challenging and stimulating than the best. Adults use the assessment information about children to provide them with tasks that have good targets for learning, matched well to their needs.

Activities are stimulating and provide a good level of challenge for all children, both the under-threes and the three- to five-year-olds. A strong feature of the curriculum is the choice available to the children, enabling them to decide which resources they wish to

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use that session. This enables them to become independent and to take responsibility for putting the equipment out and tidying up afterwards. The outdoor areas are attractive and there are plenty of opportunities for children to cover all six areas of learning out of doors as well as indoors. Children enjoy the many opportunities for role play and dressing up, and boys as well as girls play contentedly in the play kitchen and nursery. Children show a clear love of music by responding enthusiastically to recorded music, for example while using computers. However, there are currently too few opportunities for children to develop a sense of rhythm and to express themselves fully through music and singing.

Children are cared for and supported exceptionally well throughout the school. This is because of the school's ethos of valuing each individual. For example, a grandparent said that, thanks to the support offered by the school, her grandchild has become 'a highly motivated three-year-old who can talk for England!' Vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are looked after extremely well. The school knows their needs and goes to great lengths to provide for them, for instance by working in highly effective partnership with a range of external providers. Parents and carers are informed about their children's progress in lively and user-friendly 'Learning Stories'. Transition arrangements are exemplary. Home visits ensure that children quickly settle into the school. When the time comes for the children to move to the next stage of their education, the school's excellent partnerships with local primary schools ensure that they are prepared extremely well for the transition.

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?

The headteacher provides strong leadership focused on meeting the needs of each child in the school. The school meets the conditions of registration for 0-3 year olds. Leaders and managers ensure that that the complex childcare arrangements work efficiently and that the school runs smoothly. They are ambitious to raise the overall effectiveness of the school from good to outstanding, and have appointed a manager for the children's centre to enable them to devote more time to school improvement. Their self-evaluation and plans for the future are realistic and balanced. The children's progress is tracked well, enabling highly effective support to be put in place for any child in danger of falling behind. Leaders and managers observe lessons frequently and supportively, but do not

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always focus sufficiently on techniques that the adults could use to provide more stimulating questioning. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well, ensuring that all children make good progress and respect one another. Leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding procedures are exemplary, for example by installing CCTV cameras at all entrances. Governors provide effective support. They are fully engaged in the life of the school and are ready to hold it to account. The school promotes community cohesion exceptionally well, instilling in children a particularly strong understanding of other people's faiths and cultures. This gives them pride in their own backgrounds and respect for those of others. Leaders and managers work in extremely effective partnership with a range of external organisations to widen the children's horizons. For example regular visits by doctors not only enable the doctors to learn how healthy children behave and play, but also give the children the benefit of seeing some male role models in the school.

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded through questionnaires or who spoke to the inspection team expressed enthusiasm for the school. A very large majority agreed that their children enjoy school and that it keeps them safe and healthy. Inspectors endorse these views. Nine out of ten parents and carers were happy with their child's experiences at the school. A number commented on the enthusiasm and commitment

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shown by the adults. Inspectors agree with these views. A few parents and carers expressed a variety of concerns, and inspectors' findings on these aspects have been covered earlier in this report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Spencer 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 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	33	75	9	20	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	29	66	13	30	1	2	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	57	12	27	3	7	3	7
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	57	15	34	2	5	2	5
The teaching is good at this school	25	57	13	30	3	7	2	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	57	14	32	3	7	2	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	61	16	36	0	0	1	2
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)	22	50	16	36	5	11	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	55	15	34	1	2	2	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	50	19	43	1	2	2	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	50	18	41	1	2	2	5
The school is led and managed effectively	29	66	10	23	3	7	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	73	8	18	2	5	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

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.



21 June 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Spencer Nursery School, Mitcham, CR4 4JP

A little while ago two visitors came to your school to watch you learn and play. We had a lovely time at your school. Thank you for welcoming us. This is what we found.

- You go to a good school where you learn well and enjoy each day. Your parents and carers tell us how sad you are to go home!
- You get on well with one another, and always share and take turns.
- All the adults take extremely good care of you.
- Your school keeps you completely healthy. You know which foods are good for you, and which are not as healthy.
- Your school keeps you completely safe. You know how to say, 'I don't like it', and this is a good way of staying safe.
- Your school gives you many exciting activities to help you learn. You love all the chances you are given for cycling and painting and sticking and cooking and growing strawberries! The youngest ones among you have so many activities that you get really tired and need your nap!
- You love the stories the adults tell you. We have asked your school to give you just as many chances to sing and play musical instruments.
- We also want the adults to ask you even more questions to help you think and work things out for yourself. We have asked those in charge to make sure this happens.
- Even though you are very young, you can still do your bit to help your school by being as kind and helpful as you can to one another and to all the adults.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Natalia Power

Lead inspector

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