

Old Church Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100885
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	376478
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2012
Lead inspector	Kath Beck

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 sections 49 and 50 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	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Warburton
Headteacher	Sarah Helm
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 November 2008
School address	Walter Terrace Off Bromley Street London E1 0RJ
Telephone number	020 7790 2824
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Registered childcare provision	Old Church Nursery Pre-School
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	20
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	Not previously inspected

Age group	3–5
Inspection date(s)	15–16 May 2012
Inspection number	376478



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Introduction

Inspection team

Kath Beck

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector spent approximately five and a half hours observing teaching and learning led by 20 teachers and additional staff in the Nursery and pre-school. Discussions were held with parents and carers, members of staff, and representatives of the governing body. The inspector also spoke with children as they worked and played, and listened to a child read. The responses to the on-line Parent View survey were taken into account in planning the inspection. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at the minutes from governing body meetings, the school's self-evaluation procedures, the school development plan and safeguarding arrangements. In addition, records to track children's attainment and progress, teachers' planning and policy documents were scrutinised. The inspector considered the responses to questionnaires received from staff and 109 parents and carers. Checks were made to ensure the school met the statutory requirements for the registered childcare provision.

Information about the school

This is an above average-sized nursery school which offers 80 full-time and 40 part-time places. Almost all children come from minority ethnic groups, and four fifths are at an early stage of learning to speak English. Approximately one third are known to be eligible for free school meals. One fifth of the children are identified as having a disability and special educational needs. One has a statement of special educational needs, and a further eighteen are supported at school action plus. Their needs include speech and language, physical, behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. All children can attend the breakfast club, while those attending full-time can also attend the after-school club. Both clubs are the responsibility of the governing body.

Since the last inspection a new headteacher has been appointed. The school has been the subject of recent building work which has temporarily reduced the facilities for outside play. The Nursery has established registered provision for two-year-olds. It admits 20 children, many with a disability and special educational needs, five mornings a week. The Nursery is a community venue linked to the nearby John Smith Children's Centre. It offers 'stay and play' provision four mornings and one afternoon each week and courses for parents and carers to support their children. The children's centre was inspected separately in 2011 and the report can be found on the Ofsted website.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- Old Church Nursery is an outstanding school. Inspirational leaders and the strong staff team are highly ambitious for children to achieve as well as they can through an innovative and imaginative curriculum. The new provision for two-year-olds has been established very successfully and is enabling these children to make an excellent start to their education.
- Achievement is outstanding. Children, regardless of their background or ability, make rapid progress across all the areas of learning. Some children, including many of those who arrive with little English, have already made an early start with reading and can write simple stories and letters.
- Teaching is outstanding. Staff provide many activities that excite children’s curiosity, spark lively discussions and promote independence. Staff, who are very experienced and knowledgeable about the best ways children of this age learn, are skilled at enabling children to think critically and imaginatively. Astute observations of children’s progress and close links with parents, carers and professional advisers ensure that children’s varying needs are met exceptionally well.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Children show exceptional levels of good manners, engagement, collaboration and cooperation. Arrangements for safeguarding ensure that children are kept safe in school and while out in the community.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. High quality aspects of provision found at the time of the last inspection have been sustained. Frequent evaluation of children’s learning, staff training, performance management and sharing of expertise have brought about consistently high quality teaching and outstanding levels of achievement. Partnerships with families, members of the community, other schools, professionals, musicians, artists and visits out contribute to children’s outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural

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development. The recent building work has delayed planned improvements to the outside learning area. At present it does not reflect fully the high quality provision for learning indoors, especially with regard to the natural world.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Implement plans to provide a wide range of opportunities in the outdoor learning area to inspire children to explore and gain greater knowledge of the natural world.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children's achievements are outstanding. Their starting points vary, but generally they are well below the development levels expected for their age, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development, and communication, language and literacy. Children respond extremely well to high expectations that they can be independent, make decisions and take pride in their learning. Their personal development is exceptional, and they show high levels of confidence performing and singing solos in the local church. In other areas of learning, when children leave the Nursery most are achieving the levels expected for their age. Last year over a quarter of the children exceeded them. This illustrates the school's success in narrowing the gap in the performance of children in this age group compared with others nationally. Parents and carers are right to say that they are extremely pleased with the progress their children make.

Staff maximise the opportunities to promote children's spoken language by providing exciting experiences for them to talk about and extend their vocabulary. Children new to speaking English receive support in their home language. Staff excite children's curiosity about the importance of being able to read, write and count through practical experiences. When children invited members of the governing body to tea, they chose recipes for cakes, devised shopping lists, shopped for the ingredients, and made the cakes, weighing out the ingredients. They drew up menus and acted as waiters and waitresses writing down the 'orders' they were given. Through this activity, children learned much about the initial sounds of words and how to write them. More-able children either wrote the words independently or asked an adult to sound them out while they wrote them down. Afterwards the governors wrote the children letters of thanks, making reading and writing come alive for the children.

Children's progress is tracked rigorously. Analysis of data recently indicated a weakness in boys' writing. Staff have overcome this through innovative methods in creative play. Boys use mark-making chalk to draw complicated tracks for their cars,

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and enthusiastically record the number of times the cars go around the track. Counting and calculating are incorporated seamlessly into play activities with children counting forwards and backwards to 10 when building towers with bricks or getting ready to start a race.

Specialist staff support disabled children and those with special educational needs enabling them to make rapid progress. Staff working with children experiencing language delay, build advice from speech therapists into the activities. This enhances children's spoken English and their ability to communicate clearly.

Quality of teaching

The strong focus on meeting children's individual needs and interests characterises outstanding teaching. Daily assessments and evaluations of activities inform planning that illustrates clearly what children are to learn next. Children's 'special books', containing photographs and examples of their achievements, show their rapid progress and the impact strong teaching has on their progress across all the areas of learning. Children are exceptionally proud of these books and love sharing them with staff, their friends, family and visitors.

Adults are very skilled at supporting child-initiated activities, posing problems for them to solve and extending their learning. A group of children playing with buses and cars were challenged to build a high bridge strong enough for the vehicles to cross between two pieces of furniture. Questions encouraged them to collaborate effectively, think critically and to solve the problem. They showed resilience when it was not as easy as they thought. Once the bridge was built, the game was developed further through their favourite story about a 'Naughty Bus'. Children avidly collected items from around the classroom and outside to replicate the adventures of the bus by building a 'theatre' to tell the story to their friends. As well as promoting children's spoken language, reading, problem solving and counting skills, the story taught the children a valuable lesson about right and wrong.

Outside, children delight in the many opportunities that extend all aspects of their learning, but especially their physical development. They play football and cricket, run races, swing, climb, slide, and balance on structures they have devised. Their exploration of the properties of flowing water and the challenges to make it change direction deepened their sense of wonder about the world around them. That said, outdoor provision has little to inspire them to explore and gain in-depth knowledge of the natural world.

Disabled children and those with special educational needs or English as an additional language are integrated into all activities, but also work individually or in small groups to meet a specific need. Those at an early stage of learning English play memory games with objects or puppets to promote rapid language acquisition. Challenges for the more able build on their rapidly developing reading and calculation skills.

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Inspection evidence supports the views of parents and carers in their responses to the questionnaires that teaching is of high quality.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Children's behaviour is exemplary and contributes significantly to the vibrant and purposeful atmosphere. Their enthusiasm and very positive attitudes to learning are captured in games and activities that promote early literacy and numeracy skills successfully. Children's high levels of confidence, maturity and independence enable them to apply newly acquired skills independently. They take pride in neatly making the marks that express their imaginative ideas in stories and letters to their family. Often children become absorbed in captivating activities and concentrate for long periods of time. Games that include road safety, visits into the locality and a nearby forest help children to learn how to manage risk in the community, especially when climbing trees.

Parents, carers and staff are extremely positive about children's behaviour and safety. All consider that children are safe in school. Children from all backgrounds treat each other with respect, engaging those with a disability and special educational needs fully into their play. Staff have high expectations that children behave well and can be trusted to move between rooms sensibly as they seek out different activities. Children are taught what to say if they are concerned about what another child is doing. This helps them to develop positive relationships. No incidents of racism or bullying of any kind have been recorded in recent years because the school promotes and celebrates diversity in a highly effective manner.

Staff know their children exceptionally well, especially those whose circumstances are thought to make them vulnerable. The breakfast and after-school clubs and strong links with the nearby children's centre, health visitors and family support workers make important contributions to children's well-being and safety.

Families ensure that their children arrive on time each day. They appreciate the time they have to settle their children and talk to the staff to resolve any worries. A rich variety of learning experiences, together with very clear communications with parents and carers, ensure high levels of attendance.

Leadership and management

The pursuit of excellence in all activities is exemplified in the successful drive to ensure that children achieve as well as they can, and make the best possible start to their education. Leaders, managers, parents and carers, staff and children have all contributed to the realisation of this ambitious vision, not least through robust self-evaluation procedures and the strong track record of continuous improvement. The views of all those linked with the school, including children, are sought to identify and build on strengths as well as aspects that need improvement. A close partnership with a nearby farm has identified the improvements required in the outdoor learning area to inspire further children's understanding of the natural world.

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Children's rapid progress owes much to initiatives and staff training to increase children's skills in oral communication, literacy and numeracy. Staff confidence in observing each other, together with informal monitoring by senior leaders, has brought about the consistent implementation of new strategies and high quality teaching across the Nursery. Members of the governing body are very knowledgeable about the work of the school. They use their expertise in education and finance to monitor, evaluate, support and challenge the school about the impact of its work and ensure that it plays an important role in the community.

An imaginative, innovative and flexible curriculum meets the differing needs of the children. Often activities emerge from children's ideas. Children fascinated by boats were taken to buy the materials to build their own life-sized boat. Visits to museums, to the theatre, to the local church, the local ice-rink, and to the local special schools, as well as visiting African drummers, professional musicians and artists add much to children's excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

International Day and the celebration of festivals of different faiths reflect the school's strong commitment to equality and the prevention of discrimination. Workshops and visits to classes enable parents and carers to assist their children's learning. Safeguarding policies and procedures are thorough. Staff are well trained in first aid and child protection, and only those suitable to work in school are appointed. They work closely with parents and carers to keep their children safe in the community, around the school and at home.

Parents and carers have full confidence in the leadership and management of the school. One summarised the views of many: 'Old Church Nursery is an amazing environment for early learning. The provision is always of high quality and my daughter has visibly blossomed; she is a confident and curious learner.'

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The Early Years Foundation Stage delivered in the registered childcare provision

The provision for two-year-olds has been established extremely well. It is integrated fully into the work of the Nursery school. Staff are exceptionally skilled in working with children of this age, and with those who also speak little English or have a disability and special educational needs. The indoor environment is very attractive, well organised and a stimulating place in which to learn. High quality resources capture children’s curiosity, interest and imagination. The strong partnership established with parents and carers during ‘stay and play’ sessions, home visits, and sensitive induction procedures enables children to settle quickly, and to become confident and independent.

Outstanding teaching enables children to make rapid progress, especially in their early spoken language skills. Children enjoy their trips, along with their parents and carers, on trains and to places of local interest which extend their experiences and motivate them to want to talk. Bilingual staff encourage children to speak in their home language, as well as in English. They join in children’s play, modelling language very effectively, and ask probing questions that allow children to express their ideas.

Children’s behaviour is excellent. They play happily on their own, and together, taking turns and sharing their toys. They use tools, for example scissors, and ride their tricycles safely and carefully. Children quickly become independent and make choices from an excellent range of activities that foster active, purposeful learning. These rich, varied and imaginative experiences meet each individual child’s needs extremely well. They often stem from information from parents and carers about their child’s interests. They also emerge from the enthusiasm of the children, and from sharply focused observations that identify what children are to learn next.

Leaders and managers have high ambitions for the children and their families. Very effective partnerships with external agencies and other providers promote children’s full integration and safety. They ensure that children’s welfare needs are met and that they achieve as well as they can.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage of the registered childcare provision, inspected under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage for the registered provision	1

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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 pupils. 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



17 May 2012

Dear Children

Inspection of Old Church Nursery School, London E1 0RJ

I know that you are learning to read, but you may not be able to read my letter just yet. I am sure that a grown-up will read it to you. I want you to know that I really enjoyed my recent visit to your Nursery. Your happy smiles and friendly 'hellos' made me feel very welcome. It was a pleasure to watch you learn and play happily and safely with all of your friends. I know you are very proud of your 'special books' and often share them with your friends and family. I enjoyed looking at them too.

Your Nursery is an outstanding school because:

- the grown-ups help you to learn to read, write and count while you are playing
- you love to come to the Nursery as there are so many fun things to do
- you are very kind to one another
- you take care when climbing trees and use the woodwork tools and scissors safely
- you are good at solving problems
- you enjoy learning about the music, dances, celebrations and food from different countries
- the two-year-olds enjoy playing and learning in their new room.

To make the Nursery even better I have asked the grown-ups to make it possible for you to learn more about plants, birds and small creatures in the outside area. I am sure you will help by giving lots of ideas about how to do this.

Yours sincerely

Kath Beck
Lead inspector

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