

Low Hall Nursery School and Children's Centre

Low Hall Lane, Walthamstow, London, E17 8BE

Inspection dates

22–23 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Senior leaders and governors have worked very successfully with the local authority to overcome a period of uncertainty and instability since the previous inspection. They have secured the school's future by balancing the budget. The school is improving.
- Most children make good progress across the areas of learning and are prepared well for their transfer to Reception.
- Provision for children who have special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language is good. Consequently, they make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development, and in learning to speak English.
- Overall, teaching and learning are good. Some staff are exceptionally knowledgeable and skilled in working with children of this age.
- Children demonstrate good attitudes to learning and behave well. Often they are totally absorbed in their activities. Staff ensure that children are kept safe.
- Senior leaders and governors in place for the past 16 months have high expectations and are uncompromising in their desire for the school to be a centre of excellence in the community. They have stabilised staffing and maintained parents' high level of confidence in the school's provision.
- Teaching and learning are monitored rigorously. Areas for improvement are identified and targets set linked to raising children's achievements.
- New methods to teach the sounds letters make and resources for technology mean children's learning in these areas is improving well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all staff have yet benefited from the exceptional skills of their colleagues in enabling children to make rapid progress, especially in their mathematical development and speaking skills.
- Information from checks on what children know and can do is not used well enough to offer the most able children increased levels of challenge.
- Staff new to the school and to their leadership roles have yet to undergo training to have maximum impact on the school's improvement.
- Children with afternoon places do not attend often enough to prepare them well for the next stage in their education.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed over four hours of teaching and learning, often accompanied by the headteacher.
- Activities throughout the day, including breakfast club, lunchtime and after school were observed.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior teachers, senior early years practitioners and representatives of the governing body and local authority.
- The inspector spoke to parents when they brought their children to the nursery. The results of the school's recent survey of parents' views, that included the opportunity for them to make written comments, were considered. The school enabled 105 parents to complete, confidentially, a paper copy of the questions in the on-line survey Parent View. These views were also taken into account.
- Some of the school's documentation was reviewed. This included the school's self-evaluation summary, the school improvement plan, reports from the local authority, minutes of governing body meetings and records of governors' visits to the school, and detailed information about the federation process. In addition, the inspector reviewed the school's arrangements for safeguarding, and records of attendance and of children's progress.

Inspection team

Kath Beck, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Low Hall is similar in size to other nurseries nationally.
- Children usually attend either in the morning or afternoon during term time.
- The nursery offers flexible day care for up to 24 children aged three to five years between 8.00am and 6.00pm for 48 weeks of the year.
- The proportion of children who come from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as a second language is higher than usually found. The largest groups are from Pakistani, Eastern European, Black African and White British backgrounds. The main languages spoken by families other than English are Urdu and Polish.
- The proportion of children identified as having special educational needs is also higher than in most schools. Some children are on the autistic spectrum, whilst others experience speech and communication difficulties.
- Since the previous inspection there have been many changes in the nursery, especially with regard to staffing. The current headteacher, who is also the headteacher of Church Hill Nursery School and Children's Centre, has been supporting the school for two days a week for the past 16 months. The two teachers who take day-to-day responsibility for the school while she undertakes other duties have only recently taken up their roles. Other staff are qualified as early years practitioners.
- In September 2014, the school was registered by Ofsted to admit up to 24 two-year-olds, who are integrated fully and learn alongside the older children. This provision is inspected separately.
- On 2 February 2015, Church Hill and Low Hall Nurseries will be formally joined together under the leadership of the current headteacher and one governing body. They will also have management responsibilities for the Walthamstow West and Walthamstow East Children's Centres which are inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable all children to make the best possible progress by:
 - ensuring staff with exceptional expertise share it with their colleagues
 - use checks that identify the next steps in children's learning more effectively to offer increased levels of challenge to the most able children
 - maximise opportunities for children to develop their spoken language and mathematical skills across a wider range of activities.
- Increase the attendance of children with afternoon places. Make clear to parents that low attendance hinders their child's progress and readiness for the next stage of their education.
- Make sure that new staff gain the leadership skills they need to contribute fully to the school's development.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and governors, together with the local authority, recognise that the nursery is not as good as it was at the time of the previous inspection. Current leaders, only in place for a relatively short period of time, have quickly addressed a deficit budget and high staff turnover. There is now a strong staff team and a determination to pursue high quality in all the school's activities. Leaders' management of the children's centre and the provision for two-year-olds are at the heart of their high expectations to make the nursery a key part of the community so children make a strong start to their education.
- The quality of teaching is monitored meticulously by the headteacher who is skilled in identifying the key areas for development. These are used to set targets for improvement. Training to raise the quality of teaching is designed to meet the needs of the school. Staff and governors from the partner nursery often share their skills with those at Low Hall to enhance provision. However, staff who undertake the day-to-day leadership roles are new in post and have not yet undergone training to maximise their impact.
- The school improvement plan is based on thorough, accurate self-evaluation and detailed analysis of information about children's progress. Its aims are sharply focused to raise children's achievements and reflect a strong commitment to returning the school's effectiveness to outstanding levels.
- Children enjoy many imaginative and engaging activities that promote their curiosity and enthusiasm across all the areas of learning, indoors and outdoors. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted strongly and prepares them well for life in modern Britain. An investigation into whether cooking oil and water freeze provoked much discussion and amazement. Children love to share books with each other and adults, and try out their early writing skills confidently.
- Staff have a dedicated commitment to equality of opportunity. Children of all abilities and backgrounds participate in festivals to celebrate the different faiths and cultures within the community. The partnership with the children's centre means parents, especially those who have children with special educational needs, can get support and advice to help their children overcome barriers to their learning.
- Parents have high levels of confidence in the school, its leaders and the quality of teaching. They appreciate fully the support they receive in times of difficulty and advice in how to help their children learn at home.
- Staff are well trained and knowledgeable about how to safeguard the children in their care. They implement the statutory requirements effectively. All staff are checked for their suitability, and volunteers are not permitted to work unsupervised with children.
- The local authority has provided considerable beneficial support and guidance to the school since the previous inspection to help new leaders overcome the difficulties in staffing and finance. It will continue to do so until the federation is fully established.
- Leaders have established good procedures and contacts with local schools that enable children to transfer smoothly into their Reception classes.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Recently appointed governors are dynamic, and determined that all of the school's provision should return to being high quality. They are not afraid to use their expertise to make and implement difficult decisions to benefit the children. In a short time they have successfully engaged with the community to ensure the school's secure future. Their decision to admit two-year-olds and to be more flexible about day care is meeting local needs. It means the school is now in a more secure financial position. The forthcoming federation with another nursery school is designed to ensure more effective deployment of resources and facilitate sharing of high level skills to improve further.
 - Through their frequent visits to the school, and training, governors are fully aware of the quality of teaching and provision. Their procedures for checking on the performance of staff, link children's progress to pay and allow them to reward good teaching. As teachers are new they have not yet completed the annual process. Governors are aware of how underperformance is tackled.
 - Information used to check on progress gives governors a clear picture of children's achievements across all the areas of learning. It also informs them about the progress of children from different backgrounds, abilities and the impact of children's attendance on their readiness for primary school. They use this information to offer good levels of challenge and excellent support to the headteacher.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Children show enthusiastic attitudes to learning. They participate willingly in many activities, making choices and decisions. They are inquisitive and enjoy being creative and thinking critically, often becoming absorbed in the task. This is especially true when adults involve them in solving problems, such as how to unravel the tangle in the hose to make it reach the flower beds, or when making a den.
- Most children respond well to the promotion of high standards of behaviour. They are taught to share, to take turns, to be polite to one another and how to play happily together. Older children show considerable maturity when helping the two-year-olds settle into routines and find their way around the nursery.
- Children from all backgrounds cooperate well and show each other respect. They like to sit quietly to share a book and help their friends who are new to learning English add to their vocabulary. Those with special educational needs join in the differing activities with their classmates.
- At lunch time, children who stay all day eat together. While they are taught to say 'please' and 'thank you', other social skills, such as eating sensibly with a knife and fork, are not always well developed.
- Children who stay all day attend frequently, and this enhances their achievement. Many of the children who have afternoon places do not attend regularly. This slows their progress and they are not as well prepared for their move to the Reception year as others in the nursery.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The school's safeguarding and child protection policies are implemented consistently. Procedures are checked annually to ensure that they are effective.
- Staff take good care to remind children to move around the nursery sensibly. They allow them to take risks when climbing, and sliding down the slide and show them how to stay safe in other situations. No child has been excluded because of poor behaviour or racist incidents.
- Risk assessments and daily checks of the accommodation and toys protect children's safety. However, sometimes children are insufficiently aware of their responsibility to keep others safe. They do not always pick up items they have left on the floor before moving on to the next activity.
- The school's partnership with the children's centre and other professional agencies helps to safeguard children in other aspects of their lives.
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The quality of teaching

is good

- Good teaching nurtures, engages and motivates children to play and explore and be active in their learning. Some staff are exceptionally skilled in providing imaginative activities that enable children to learn at a rapid rate and promote their independence, but this is not consistently the case.
- Activities are planned to appeal to children's age and interests. They are amended regularly to follow up initiatives shown by the children to extend learning and encourage them to apply their developing skills. For example, during an effective short session for a small group to reinforce children's knowledge of the sounds letters make, they made up a 'silly story' about things beginning with 's'. Children asked to carry on and make books to write down and illustrate their highly imaginative stories.
- Children have various opportunities to share books, fiction and non fiction, with their friends and adults. These, along with the sessions to learn about the sounds letters make, give them a secure foundation for reading.
- Staff are well qualified and know how to ask a range of effective questions that promote children's creative, thinking and language skills. There are good opportunities for children, especially those who speak Urdu or Polish, to play and learn in their own language. That said, not all staff make the most of opportunities to enable children to extend their language development or mathematical skills across a wide enough range of activities.
- Individual sessions for children with special educational needs help them to develop their social skills rapidly so that they can be independent and play and learn along with others in the nursery. Small group sessions are not as successful when activities are not at the right pace or are not resourced well enough.
- Staff promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively by encouraging children to play together in small groups, and by delighting in watching butterflies emerge from cocoons and chicks hatching. Resources reflect the children's different cultural backgrounds. Snack time is well used as a social occasion for children to talk to their friends and adults.
- Weekly reviews enable staff to share information about what children have learned, and how individual needs can be met. The information from these and other checks on progress are not used well enough to

offer increased challenge to the most able children.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children make good progress from their wide ranging starting points. Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced new systems to check upon children's progress over time. They indicate that, overall, children make the best progress in their physical, personal, social and emotional development, and expressive arts and design. Children are confident, independent and have positive relationships.
- Checks shows that in 2013–2014, children's progress, although good, was slower in literacy, shapes, space and measures, and understanding of the world. These areas of learning became a priority for development.
- Successful small group sessions are improving children's knowledge of the sounds letters make, and the children apply this knowledge in self-chosen tasks. Many other opportunities are enabling them to increase their knowledge of people, places and the environment, and the effective use of technology.
- Through activities such as making a fruit salad, children learn to count in sequence to 10 and to use mathematical vocabulary such as bigger, smaller, whole and half confidently. Other mathematical vocabulary or counting skills are not as well integrated into games children play. Mathematical activities set up for children to do on their own do not sustain their interest as well as they could.
- Role play, problem solving, storytelling, art and craft activities enable children to develop their imagination and communication skills effectively. Children become absorbed in their tasks and learn well through playing and exploring.
- Children who speak Urdu and Polish make rapid progress in their communication and language development because the nursery makes provision for them to learn and play in their own languages.
- As a result of the early identification of their learning needs, and strong support, children with special educational needs make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Staff work in close partnership with parents, and advice from speech therapists is implemented fully. This helps children with speech and language difficulties to develop the ability to make their wishes known clearly.
- Most able children are developing their literacy skills well. Some leave the nursery working at levels found in Reception classes. That said, not all activities in the nursery offer them sufficient challenge to acquire a broader range of skills and depth of knowledge across the areas of learning.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103027
Local authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	449525

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Daniel Edelstyn
Headteacher	Sandra Campbell
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 November 2011
Telephone number	02085201689
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