

Margaret McMillan Nursery School

Hornsey Rise, London, N19 3SF

Inspection dates 5–6 February 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children thrive in this Nursery school. They have many opportunities to use good quality equipment to play imaginatively. The school has a large garden that has many opportunities for children to explore, grow things and develop good physical skills.
- Children from a wide variety of backgrounds and many who are new to learning English make good progress in learning to communicate. They really enjoy making and reading books to tell stories.
- Children develop mathematical and coordination skills very well, building with large blocks and following plans and designs to construct objects.
- Teachers and other adults plan interesting activities to extend children's development. They are very knowledgeable about the next steps in children's learning so always make sure that this happens.
- Children play together really well, feel safe and learn how to assess risk for themselves. Their behaviour is outstanding.
- The senior leaders know exactly what needs to be done to continue to improve the Nursery because they use good systems to check how well the school is doing. Governors are experienced and hold the headteacher and school to account well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Adults do not always use questions skilfully enough to enable children to explain what they are learning.
- Middle leaders do not make sure that the training improves practice of all staff.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 13 sessions or part sessions of teaching and learning activities in the Nursery, spending a morning and afternoon undertaking joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The inspector also read books with children.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior managers and the Chair of the Governing Body, a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority and there were informal discussions with children and parents and carers.
- There were 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the inspector took account of feedback from parental questionnaires undertaken by the school.
- The inspector looked at the Nursery's documents, including records of assessment and children's progress, planning for improvement, monitoring of teaching and learning and records about attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Janet Dinsmore, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Margaret McMillan Nursery School is of larger than average size compared with schools of this type.
- The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is much higher than average.
- The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is also much higher than average. At the time of the inspection the Nursery was not in receipt of pupil premium (additional government funding) for these children.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs supported at early years action plus is much higher than average. The proportion supported at early years action is average. There are six places which are specially resourced for children with complex special educational needs.
- Children at this Nursery do not attend any alternative provision.
- The Nursery class sessions, (9.30am – 11.45am and 1.15pm – 3.30pm) are integrated with the children's centre. Children attend for 15 hours each week, which includes one full day. Parents and carers can also pay for additional time if they wish.
- The children's centre also provides day care for 0–3 year olds. This aspect of the provision was not part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching from good to outstanding by ensuring that all adults use questions skilfully so that children are able to explain what they are learning.
- Improve leadership and management so that middle leaders check and coach staff so that the good training they receive improves their practice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children arrive at the Nursery after their third birthday and may stay there for up to five terms before they start school. About a third arrive with skills below the levels expected for their age and two thirds leave with levels higher than expected, having made good progress. Some individual children make rapid progress and disabled children and those with special educational needs, including those with complex needs in the specially resourced provision, also make good progress.
- Children make particularly good progress in communication skills. Nursery staff check children's language skills when they arrive and ensure that they have lots of opportunities for speaking and listening so that they make good progress. Some children, including those new to learning English, have specific opportunities to make sure that they develop these skills well.
- Children really enjoy books in the Nursery. They listen to stories and use books in the reading corners frequently. They enjoy retelling familiar stories and commenting on the antics of characters. They enjoy practising their writing skills and knowledge of letters and sounds when they make their own books and eagerly share them with their friends.
- Children have many opportunities to practise number and calculation skills, for example in measuring the lengths of pipes needed in the 'building project', recording how many beanbags they have thrown into the net and counting coloured beans when taking turns playing a game.
- The whole Nursery is well planned and resourced. All the equipment is very easy for children to find and also put away when they have finished. They show good independence in putting coats and boots on and off so that they can play in the muddy parts of the garden. They enjoy learning about the world around them, and building their measuring skills when they find worms in the garden and discuss the lengths of them.

The quality of teaching is good

- There is strong teamwork among all the staff in the Nursery. They plan activities to promote particular next steps of learning for individual children. These are discussed at the beginning of each day and in teams at the end of the day so that children's progress is constantly checked. Daily plans are continually revised according to children's interests from the previous day's learning.
- Children show great interest in the 'building site' where they used large construction blocks and pipes to make buildings. Most adults skilfully support the children with this, extending their ideas through questioning to develop the buildings further, for example in using the pipes as a heating system. A few staff do not always question skilfully enough to enable children to explain what they are learning.
- Topics are planned using story books, this involves the children really well and develops with the children's interests. For example, recent work using 'Percy the Park Keeper' has enabled children to learn about different animals and use the excellent outdoor garden to its full potential by investigating where little creatures live. The Chinese Year of the Snake resulted in children using snake shapes in many aspects of play, drawing and learning sounds. The wide variety of cultures that children and their families come from is used well, so extending everyone's understanding of our multicultural society.
- The equipment in the Nursery is exceptionally well designed to enable children to explore and develop role play, creativity and science. This ensures that mathematical and social skills are developed well as children construct buildings together or play board games. They also learned how to follow a recipe when they made crepes. They enjoyed counting and mixing, and exploring oil and water mixtures, so developing their scientific understanding.
- There are many opportunities for children to develop their imaginative and physical skills in playing, for example in constructing complex houses and spaces for model dinosaurs or role

playing feeding babies and packing for a picnic in another area of the Nursery. Adults follow children's lead well in this type of play, making suggestions and enabling children to develop their skills and have the confidence to try new things out particularly when they are new to the Nursery.

- There are planned opportunities for children to work in small groups with an adult to promote particular aspects of language and social skills development. Staff work closely with speech and language therapists to ensure that children who are having difficulty in developing speech and communication skills are well supported.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children behave extremely well. They work together exceptionally well in pairs often discussing what they are doing and helping each other. They are very confident to talk to adults and those with very little English feel very safe and secure in the Nursery because they play happily, rapidly gaining understanding. There are no incidents of any behaviour that could be described as bullying because children are so busy getting on with what they are doing.
- Adults have excellent expectations of children's behaviour and relationships at all levels are very strong. Parents and carers comment that staff know their children really well and are very effective at helping them to learn. Parents and carers appreciate the excellent opportunities for play, climbing and exploration that children have in the well-resourced, large garden and choose the Nursery especially because of this.
- Children have many opportunities to learn how to use a vast range of equipment safely, particularly all the climbing apparatus in the garden. Their understanding of how to keep safe is so strong that they can discuss what is safe and what risks may be involved, for example in climbing slopes and jumping off and riding the trikes around the garden paths. They handle large wooden blocks and scissors extremely carefully.
- Children who have complex needs, including autistic spectrum conditions, are supported well to reduce anxiety and enable them to communicate so that situations that can cause disruptive behaviour are minimised.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteachers' excellent knowledge of early childhood development and practice enables them to ensure that teaching staff are well trained and supported. Performance management is rigorous and teachers are paid according to how well they perform in the classroom. The systems for supporting newly qualified teachers and developing their practice are excellent.
- Excellent checklists are used to work out what else needs to be done to improve the Nursery and this combined with the checks made on children's progress mean that senior staff have an accurate view and good plans for further improvement. The headteacher and senior leaders have ensured that the area for improvement from the previous report, making all staff aware of the Nursery's requirements, values and approaches so that they can work together, has been acted upon. The current teamwork and ambition demonstrate that there is capacity for further improvement.
- Staff receive good training but middle leaders do not always coach them to ensure that their practice improves. Some staff work in both the Nursery and children's centre so there is similar practice which ensures that children move from day care to Nursery classes seamlessly.
- There has been significant upheaval for the Nursery as a result of building work taking several years and changes in staff. This has been managed skilfully to prevent disruption for children. The local authority has confidence in the leadership and governance to continue to improve and provides support in agreement with the Nursery. Statutory requirements for safeguarding are met.
- Parents and carers value the Nursery very highly, particularly the relationships the staff have

with them and their children. They say, 'It's like a family.' Parents and carers of disabled children and those with special educational needs are particularly well supported as are those who find it more difficult to maintain contact with the staff at the Nursery and children's centre. Parents and carers particularly value opportunities to attend courses and work with their children, for example for healthy eating and cooking where they made pizzas together, saying that they do not get these sort of opportunities when they are busy at home.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are effective at holding the school to account, supporting all the developments within the whole children's centre and ensuring financial stability with frequent and rapidly changing funding. Governors visit the school and receive regular reports from the headteacher and plan strategically for improvements. They are a well-trained, longstanding and highly experienced governing body with an excellent range of skills from finance, business, education and industry. They manage the performance of the headteacher, know the quality of the Nursery's provision and ensure that teachers are rewarded according to their performance in the classroom. They ensure that all groups of children from many different backgrounds make the same good progress. Equality of opportunity and absence of any discrimination are fundamental aspects of the way the Nursery works within the children's centre. Parents and carers comment that it is 'the same high quality wherever you are'.

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	100384
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	400410

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	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Stanton-Ife
Headteacher	Mary Hart
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 October 2009
Telephone number	020 7281 2745
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