

St Stephen's Children Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102704
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	286464
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2007
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	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	137
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Perryn Jasper
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Buckingham
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2002
School address	Whitfield Road London E6 1AS
Telephone number	020 8471 1366
Fax number	020 8470 9351

Age group	3–5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This nursery school is now part of a children's centre, which was established in April 2007. The children's centre offers a wide range of facilities and resources for children aged between 0 and 11 years and their families. Most children attend the nursery for either a morning or afternoon session; some attend both sessions and some attend extended day care. Children come from a wide variety of backgrounds. About 75 % of children are of Asian, mostly Indian, descent. Twenty six different languages are currently spoken by children at the nursery. Eighty seven per cent of children have English as an additional language. About 60% are at early stages of English. A small number of children have learning difficulties and disabilities, none have statements. There has been considerable building and refurbishment work over the past two years. There have also been significant changes in leadership and management. The head teacher and two deputy head teachers are in acting capacities. The deputy head teachers, who have been at the centre for considerable time, have been in their new roles since September. The part-time head teacher, who has been seconded from another nursery, has been in this position for a week. Four out of the six teachers in the nursery are new to the profession.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good nursery with some outstanding elements including children's personal and social development and well-being and some aspects of the curriculum. Because of staff commitment, excellent team-work, a diverse, engaging curriculum and good teaching and learning all the children achieve well. Children and staff enjoy the nursery greatly and all are cared for and supported well. One parent said, 'My child enjoys going to school, she learns so much.' Links with families and professional agencies are outstanding. Social diversity and cohesion are valued and nurtured. One parent commented that the service offered meets the needs of the community whilst another said, 'My child feels the nursery is like home from home.'

The Centre has grown considerably over the past two years. Building work has taken time and energy. Difficulties in recruiting a deputy head teacher and the departure of the head teacher have been managed well. The acting deputy head teachers know the setting, children, and families well. They are successful and highly dedicated practitioners. The new acting head teacher is astute and, highly experienced. She has rapidly identified the nursery's strengths and areas for development, updated the school development plan and sharpened self-evaluation. Her insight and experience have already helped staff to improve provision, for example, in the way children are grouped at the end of sessions. This has improved the time allocated to direct teaching and the quality of learning in each session. Whilst monitoring and evaluation are good overall, some areas are less well developed. Successful monitoring of newly qualified teachers has helped ensure that the quality of teaching and learning in their lessons is good. However the monitoring system does not extend to all teaching staff, consequently its overall impact in improving teaching even further is limited.

Children start at the school with levels of knowledge, skills and understanding lower than those expected for this age. Because of good teaching, strong links with parents, effective care and support and an engaging curriculum, the progress of all children is at least good. Progress in personal and social development is outstanding and some children make particularly good progress in their communication skills. Planning covers all six areas of learning well and activities are suitably modified to meet children's interests and needs. This ensures that they all make good progress. However there is still room for improvement. Assessments are not always used sufficiently well to plan activities which are finely matched to children's needs enabling them to make even better progress. Standards are broadly in line with those expected by the time children leave nursery.

Children behave extremely well. During their time at nursery most become exceptionally independent, interested and motivated in their learning. This is largely because resources are so attractive and accessible, activities are so interesting and staff interact so skilfully to extend children's confidence and self-esteem. Children work and play extremely safely together. They successfully learn to use tools such as saws, hammers and scissors thoughtfully and carefully. They are successfully developing healthy lifestyles by eating fruit and vegetables and entering into active physical play both indoors and out. They contribute well to their nursery community by helping to tidy up and taking initiatives to care for resources themselves. Good progress in learning and excellent relationships ensure they are all well prepared for later life and learning.

There has been good progress in the nursery since the last inspection. Given the high level of staff commitment and astute input of the current head teacher, the capacity for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

As a nursery school, the Foundation Stage is completely covered by the Overall Effectiveness section.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the monitoring of teaching and learning to include all staff.
- Use assessments in a more sharply focussed way to ensure that the precise learning needs of each individual child are consistently met.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

As the result of very good relationships with staff, imaginative activities, access to a wide range of very attractive resources, and effective teaching, all the children make good progress in their learning and very good progress in personal and social skills. Although activities are highly engaging, plans do not always take sufficient account of details in children's assessments to ensure that progress is consistently better than this. No significant differences in the achievement of different groups of children are apparent. Imaginative, challenging and open-ended activities enable children who learn more quickly or easily make further progress. Children who have learning difficulties or disabilities are supported and cared for well. Children who have English as an additional language make particularly good progress in their communication skills because of the very skilful way staff use community languages. Progress is not consistently better than this because activities are not always sufficiently finely tuned to meet individual learning needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children are very well behaved, independent, confident and interested in their work. Their smiles, skips and laughter indicate just how much they enjoy their time at nursery. They are considerate and kind to each other, for example one child helped another wash a grazed knee and comforted him until he felt better. Children contribute well to the nursery by helping to tidy up and look after resources, for example one boy noticed a skittle on the floor, and so returned it to its correct place. Children play and work extremely safely together and are developing an understanding of healthy lifestyles through eating fruit and vegetables and exercising during play. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Children participate in a diverse range of cultural and religious celebrations. These add to their enjoyment of learning, build the self-esteem of children from a range of cultures, and contribute to social cohesion. Children are awe-inspired by resources such as beautiful fabric for collage, the appearance of a range of stones and gravel in water, and the growth of fruit and vegetables in the allotment. Although there are a number of absences largely due to extended holidays and illness, children's prompt arrival at sessions indicates their eagerness to attend.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Children learn well because of the good quality of teaching and good use of a wide range of attractive resources. Staff know the children well, understand child- development and are very familiar with the Foundation Stage curriculum. Planning covers all areas of learning and activities are suitably adapted to meet children's varying interests and needs. Assessments are not always used sufficiently well however to finely tune activities so that children make even better progress. Relationships are excellent and children respond well to praise and the high expectations of staff. They are interested, motivated and keen. There are many opportunities for children to work on their own, with peers and with adults. All these factors successfully contribute to good progress and outstanding personal development. Staff who are new to teaching have assumed their roles quickly and skilfully. Most teaching assistants have been at the nursery for a long time and are very effective in their work. Although the monitoring of newly qualified staff has helped ensure that teaching and learning are good, monitoring systems do not currently cover all staff and some opportunities to develop children's learning even further are missed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with outstanding features. Its excellent breadth successfully contributes to pupil's outstanding personal development, helps prepare them for later life and adds to social cohesion. Staff reported how successful a recent Diwali party had been and how well pupils and families from differing cultural and religious traditions had participated and contributed. These events, along with visits out with parents, such as 'mathematics walks' in the environment and a trip to a sea life centre, help parents extend children's learning at home. Planning is rooted in the Foundation Stage curriculum, and all requirements of this are met. Although activities are adequately modified to meet children's interests and needs, assessments of children's skills, understanding and knowledge are not always used sufficiently well to ensure that activities are finely tuned to help all children make even better progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All the children are well cared for and supported by staff and by each other. Families are also cared for and supported well for example through 'family learning' sessions and English classes. Parents appreciate these, as one said, 'I am especially impressed with the range of courses offered to parents.' Systems to ensure children's health and safety are secure. Staff successfully identify and support the needs of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Links with other professionals including psychologists and speech therapists are excellent. Assessments and guidance for learning are satisfactory. Although 'pupil profiles' contain lots of observations and samples of children's work, they do not always fully show what children know, understand and can do. In line with local authority requirements, progress in personal and social development, physical, personal and social development and some elements of communication, language and literacy are tracked and analysed in depth. Other areas are not considered in such detail. Targets for future learning are agreed by staff and parents each term but are not always shared with children or used sufficiently in planning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders, managers and all the staff have coped well with considerable change and upheaval over the past two years. As a result, provision for children continues to be effective and outcomes of progress and personal development are at least good. Governors support and challenge the nursery well. Effective self evaluation and monitoring ensures that provision is good and that all children make good progress. However, it is not yet sufficiently rigorous or used sufficiently well to ensure that provision improves and that the progress of children is even better. Most parents are very happy with, and supportive of, all the nursery provides. Links with other agencies and professionals are extremely good, providing additional professional support and substantial additional funding.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Stephen's Children Centre, London, E6 1AS

Thank you for making me feel so welcome in your nursery when I visited recently. I was pleased to meet many of you and to see how very much you all enjoy your time there.

You are very well behaved, considerate and helpful. You are all keen to learn and are beginning to do lots of things without any help. There are so many interesting things for you to use and do while you are there. You are all taught well and are making good progress in your learning. Some of you are making particularly good progress in the way you understand and talk to others, some of you are developing your English very well - well done. Nearly all your parents are very happy with your nursery and are grateful for the way it helps them too. Your teachers are kind, they work hard and look after you well. You learn to work and play together very safely. By the time you leave you are all well prepared for your next schools.

Although activities are interesting and suitable for you all they do not always help you to learn even more. I have asked your staff to use what they know about your learning even more carefully when they plan activities so that you can all make even more progress. I have also asked them to look carefully at how they teach you so that this can be improved even further.

Perhaps you can help them by discussing your 'pupil profiles' with your staff and telling them what really helps you with your learning.

With best wishes to you and your families.

Jo Curd

Lead Inspector